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Fables.



FABLES

BY

JAMES H. AVELING, M.D.

“And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.”

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Dedication.

TO THE PRINCESS FREDERICA

*the Author is indebted for the permission of associating these
Fables with the name of Her Royal Highness, whose sympathy
with suffering and practical efforts to relieve it have elicited the
love and admiration of this nation.*

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FABLES.

Proem.

WITH Welkin, Water, Wood, and Wind.
The fittest, firmest friends I find,
I wander worshipping when, worn
With toil, I'm troubled, tired, and torn.

When brain and body burdens bear
Beyond their strength, and say, "Beware,"
How happily I, hand in hand,
Leap lightly o'er the lovely land
With my firm friends, and fear no foe,
Nor news, nor noise, nor noyance know.

Come, Comrade, cast thy ceaseless care.
And wander with us ev'rywhere,
Till weariness and weakness wane,
And happy health returns again.

FABLES.

I.

Stone and Stream.

A STURDY Stone stood in a Stream
Philosophising in the gleam
Of one of summer's brightest days ;
And, full of wonder and amaze,
Was puzzled how the Stream could race
From all the beauties of the place
In which for ages it had stood,
And found all beautiful and good !

“The flowers,” Stone said, “on the banks,
The silver fishes and their pranks,
The polished pebbles white and brown,
The ferns and floating thistledown,
The leaping lambs, the lowing herds,
The scented trees and singing birds :
Oh, what a foolish Stream is this
To fly away from so much bliss !”

“Thou stupid Stone!” the Stream then
said,
“Scant wisdom dwells in thy grey head !
In this still eddy I will glide
And stay a moment by thy side,
To show how miserably base
And foolish ’tis, in this dull place,
To dwell and drearily drag on
Thy life with nought to look upon.

“Why, I have passed a place to-day
Than this a thousand times more gay ;
And as I speed I’m sure to find
More beauties than I leave behind.
To-day, not broiling in the sun,
I through a shady wood have run,
And there I met a maiden sweet,
And gently kissed her naked feet.
While softly on the golden sands,
Caressing me with white, white hands,
She lay ! Would’st thou such pleasures
share ?
No ! by thy cold and scornful stare
I see thou wilt not come with me ;
Stay, stay then in thy misery !”
So at the Stone the Stream once glanced,
And loudly laughing, onward danced.

“Go, giddy Stream ! fly on ! fly on !
I care not whither thou art gone ;
But this I know, while happy here,
With never-ceasing pleasures near,
I will not wander where may be,
Instead of joy, dark misery.
Go, silly Stream ! Could'st thou but stand
And gaze for one day on the land ;
Or for a moment just to see
One little wild anemone !
Could'st thou but see it ope at morn,
Thou would'st not think me lone and lorn ;
Could'st thou but watch it spread at day,
And with the trembling wind at play ;
Or closing at the coming night,
So gently that a sylphid might
Lie sleeping in its lily breast,
And know no sorrow in her rest,
When by its tender petals pressed ;
Poor Stream ! thou then would'st envy me,
Would'st envy my stupidity !’

On, on the heedless Stream fast flew ;
Sweet flowers kissing, drinking dew,
Until at length, with one last leap,
It plunged into the ocean deep ;
Therein to wander long alone,
And envy the contented Stone.

II.

Frog and Fly.

A FROG who had escaped the strife
 And perils of its tadpole life,
 Upon a pool's fresh flow'ry banks
 His lifetime spent in merry pranks,
 With not a thought his head to tease,
 And but one task—to live at ease.

But ere this Frog was three months old,
 He grew luxurious and bold ;
 For though he'd flies whereon to feed.
 They did not suit his dainty greed.
 He cared not for the common fly
 Which waited, to be eaten, by ;
 He cared not for the tender gnat,
 But longed for something large and fat :
 And thus the tedious time he spent
 Ungratified and ill-content.

At length, one day, he chanced to spy,
 Aloft, a large Bluebottle fly.

It looked so juicy and so plump,
His heart and he gave one great jump ;
But though he sprang with all his might.
He could not leap the needful height ;
So, sorely bruised and dead well-nigh,
He cursed the bright Bluebottle fly,
And, 'neath a green projecting stone,
Sat silently and sulked alone.

Anon, the common fly and gnat •
Flew by in swarms just where he sat ;
But, though exhausted, in his pride,
He would not eat them though he died !

At last the bright Bluebottle fly,
With mischief twinkling in his eye,
Flew down and settled, as in scorn,
Close by the Frog upon a thorn.
The point of which, so long and keen,
Was hid among the foliage green.
The Frog, delighted, soon revived.
And thinking luck had now arrived,
Gave one unerring, savage spring ;
But crafty Fly at once took wing,
And left him bleeding, pierced, and torn,
Impaled upon the treach'rous thorn.

Lo ! as he hung there dead next day.
The flies ran o'er his back in play,

While others, buzzing to and fro,
Exulted o'er their fallen foe.
And came the bright Bluebottle fly,
Who ate the flesh about Frog's eye,
And never wanted food, nor fasted,
As long as his fat carcass lasted.
E'en in his mouth the insects crept
For shelter from the storms, and slept ;
So little cared they for him now
That he was hanging on a bough.

When winter came and laid all bare,
The shrivelled Frog was hanging there,
To all a warning monument
'Gainst daintiness and discontent !

III.

Sun and Shadow.

“ Now tell me, Oak,” the Sun once cried,
“ What dwells upon thine other side.
It puzzles much our royal mind
To know what ’tis you keep behind
So snugly that we ne’er can see it ;
Come, tell us quickly ; we decree it ! ”

This question made the old Oak quake
And tremblingly he humbly spake :
“ O Sun, great king, whom all obey,
Forgive the words I now must say ;
What stands the other side of me
Thy royal eye can never see ! ”

“ ’Sdeath ! ” cried the Sun, “ I’ll burn thee
down ! ”

And gave the Oak so dread a frown,
That ev’ry leaf upon the tree
Shrank up and withered instantly.

Then cruel fierce rays fiery came,
And wrapt the martyr Oak in flame.

The Wind, who chanced to pass that way,
Fell breathless back, in great dismay ;
Then sighing, with a bitter smile,
Lay gently down and watched awhile.

Fast, fast the flame-fangs gnashed and tore
Through bark and bole to Oak's stout core,
Consuming all his sap and strength,
Until his dear friend Death at length
Drew near, when mute, without a sigh,
With red arms stretching to the sky,
Oak bent his head, and reeling round,
Fell dead in ashes to the ground.

Then all the grass and ferns around,
With weird and sorrow-laden sound,
Bade welcome to the cruel fire,
And formed the Oak's funereal pyre.

"What !" wrathfully the Sun then cried,
"That old Oak must have basely lied !
Where is the thing he said to me
My royal eyes could never see ?"

At this the Wind in laughter broke,
And soon to angry Sun thus spoke :
"Standing behind that old Oak tree,
I've seen what you so wished to see ;
It was a Shadow, dark and broad,
By lovers more than thee adored."

"Thou liest, Wind !" the Sun exclaimed,
While fury from his flushed face flamed.

"Come, quiet thee," the cool Wind said,
"For I thine anger nothing dread.
This is the truth, which now I tell ;
The Shadow died when yon Oak fell.
'Tis an immutable decree
That you each other ne'er shall see ;
And now, proud king, bend low thine head,
For through thy disbelief lies dead,
In all this grove, the fairest Oak,
Because, forsooth, the truth he spoke !"

Then, moralising on the day,
The Wind went whistling on his way,
While Sun turned crimson in the face,
And hid himself in deep disgrace.

IV.

The Greedy Gander.

A FARMER'S wife, at market been,
Returning with her basket clean,
Dropped, in a field she had to pass,
A paper parcel in the grass ;
And, hastening to her children crying,
Beside the pathway left it lying.

Some Geese were in the meadow feeding,
A Gander at their head was leading ;
Anon he found the parcel white,
And scarcely could believe his sight.

“What !” screamed he, blinking both his eyes,
“’Tis labelled ‘Grains of Paradise !’
Oh ! what a treasure I have found.”
Then regally he gazed around,
Until the Geese were filled with awe,
And thought it better to withdraw.

This seemed to be the Gander's will,
For instantly he struck his bill

Among the brown three-cornered seed ;
And deigned no more the flock to heed,
But ate the grains with upturned face,
And swallowed with a Gander's grace.

With gluttonous and angry eye
He met the Geese when they drew nigh ;
And if they boldly tried to taste,
He pecked their heads with savage haste.
Some praised his plumage, called him Swan,
Or fetched him worms to feed upon ;
But all their wiles alike were vain,
Not one of them dared taste the grain,
For he refused their gifts and praise,
Regarding them with scornful gaze ;
Yet now and then, as if to mock
The longing and impatient flock,
He, with bewitching, upturned eyes,
Extolled the " Grains of Paradise,"
And praised the warm stomachic glow,
Beginning fast within to grow !

'Twas thus, in spite of praise or hate,
The greedy, gobbling Gander ate,
Until, alas ! his upturned eye
Assumed a look of agony !

The fine stomachic warmth had grown,
As dull fires do when they are blown,
More hot by each new swallowed grain
Until the Gander, racked with pain,
And yet too proud to own it, found
The meadow reeling round and round.

'Twas hard in such a woeful case
To wear a calm and cheerful face ;
But such the Gander's seemed, alas !
Until he fell upon the grass,
Where, hissing out his painful breath,
He closed his eyes at last in death.

No moral here would be of use ;
A Man could never be a Goose !

V.

Birch and Beech.

WITHIN a wild and widespread wood
Two green and healthy saplings stood—
A Birch and Beech, and, 'twixt the two,
A little bending Bramble grew,
Which blindly groped about in quest
Of some kind friend whereon to rest.

Ere long its arms contrived to reach
The prosperous and pompous Beech,
And quite unconscious of its pride,
Climbed confidently up its side,
Till, aided by the friendly wind,
Both Beech and Bramble were entwined.

Said Bramble, "I will keep thee warm
When winter comes with with'ring storm;
And if thou grant my poor request,
To let me on thy branches rest,
I'll clothe thee with a goodly suit
Of golden leaves and coral fruit."

“Base Bramble!” cried the Beech, “begone,
Find other fools to rest upon :
I need no gaudy leaves of gold
To keep me from the winter’s cold.
Dost think, like others, I’m a goose,
And cast my leaves when they’re of use ?
No, no ! I keep them brown and dry,
To ward off wind, and frost defy.
Besides, thou grov’ller, is it meet
That I, who soon, full fifty feet,
My mighty arms shall heav’nward stretch,
Should mate with thee, poor feeble wretch ?”

Then with a sharp and angry toss
Beech threw the Bramble straight across
Upon the branches of the Birch,
Thus saving it all further search ;
For, being humble, weak, and young,
Birch loved the Bramble as it clung
With trembling arms ; for sympathy
Makes friend find friend most readily :
And thus these twain together grew
In harmony, a year or two.

The haughty Beech, still full of pride,
Would ev’ry day the Birch deride,

Because the Bramble, growing fast.
Its branches all about had cast ;
And some had grown to such a height,
They almost hid the Birch from sight.

“ ’Twill choke thee soon,” the Beech would
cry,
“ Poor fool ! and I shall see thee die.”

But folly’s fate is to be crushed ;
How soon the boastful Beech was hushed ;
For, fast and furious, there came
A tempest terrible as flame !
Yea, fearful as the fiercest fire ;
Destructive, dealing death, and dire ;
Timber cracking, branches falling,
Trees uprooted, shocks appalling !

Beneath the blast the Beech was bent,
Till limb from limb was rudely rent.
It seemed as if the earth would be
Swept bare of ev’ry plant and tree ;
But Bramble bound the Birch so fast,
Unscathed it stood and bore the blast.

Still worse than wind there came that way,
Affrighted by the storm, astray,

A drove of cattle, mad and lost,
Which trampled all to death it crost.

Of branches stript, and well-nigh dead,
The Beech was crushed beneath their tread,
But all the cattle turned away
From where the prickly Bramble lay.

Thus Bramble once again repaid
The Birch's tender, timely aid.

VI.

How Hammer and Tongs Talked.

'Twas in a village blacksmith's shop
I heard this conversation drop.

“Drive!” said the Hammer, with a blow,
“If you would have the thing to go.
I care not for your coaxing ways,
Your winning words and fulsome praise ;
I hate the lazy, servile tribe
Who will not work without a bribe ;
And if the whole were crushed to dust,
I think it would be wise and just.”

“Nay, hold, good Hammer!” cried the
Tongs ;
“This world has felt enough of wrongs,
And knows too well what it has gained
When force and tyranny have reigned.
It feels the stripes still on its back ;
Its joints forget not yet the rack ;

Its limbs still feel the gnawing pains
Of cramped captivity and chains.
It never more will suffer might
To stifle liberty and right."

"Confound you! Hold your feeble rant
'Bout liberty and such-like cant;
Weak words which fly away like chaff
Before the mighty sword and staff;
For right means wrong without redress,
And liberty, licentiousness.
Strict laws and speedy sentence give
Wise warning to the fools who live.
Your mercy is the filthy slime
Which feeds the fiendish tree of crime.
I hold that potentate most just
Whose officers are Shall and Must.
Would'st thou have kings, upon their knees,
Their subjects rule by saying—Please?"

"No, no!" said Tongs; "all kiss the hand
Of him who rules, in any land,
With merciful and righteous laws,
With ready ear for ev'ry cause,
With helping hand in all distress,
And aid, when strong the weak oppress;
But soon accursed, in ev'ry land,
Is he who rules with iron hand."

Impatient, down the Hammer came,
Bespattering, with sparks and flame,
The Tongs and ev'rything around,
And well-nigh deaf'ning with the sound
The blacksmith and his friends, who sat
Discussing news and village chat.

“I'll hear no more !” the Hammer cried.
“Well,” said the Tongs, “the world is wide,
And there are savages enough
Whose minds are dense and skins are tough ;
Go, try to drive them with thy blows.”
“While you lead weak ones by the nose !”
The Hammer said with angry rattle.
And thus was closed the fruitless battle,
Displaying well how little use
It is to argue with abuse.

None can convince, nor right their wrongs,
Who talk as Hammer talked to Tongs.

VII.

Cloud and Clod.

A DREARY dearth, from want of rain,
Thus made a crusty Clod complain.

With vengeful voice he cried aloud :
“Stay, stay ! thou cruel, cursed Cloud.
Did I not lend thee dew and rain
That thou should’st bring them back again?
Thou givest me, for life and breath,
Dry dust, and direful drought and death.”

The smiling, shining Cloud replied :
“I have a Pilot for my guide,
Who steers me with a loving hand
O’er hill and dale, and sea and land.
Have faith, for He is kind and wise ;
And knows the secrets of the skies,
The hills, the woods, the vales and fields,
And ever generously yields
To those who give, a hundred-fold ;
For silver lent, He renders gold.”

“Thy fine words fatten not nor feed
The famished sheep, nor soak the seed.
They freshen not the flow’rs, nor fill
Each empty river, pond, and rill.
The land is cracked on ev’ry side ;
Its million mouths are gaping wide.”
Aloud, the Clod, in rage and pain,
Cried, “Bring the rain ! bring, bring the
rain !”

But still the shining Cloud replied :
“I have a Pilot for my guide,
Who steers me with a loving hand
O’er hill and dale, and sea and land.
Have faith, for He is kind and wise ;
And knows the secrets of the skies ;
The hills, the woods, the vales and fields,
And ever generously yields
To those who lend, a hundred-fold ;
For silver lent, He renders gold.”

“Thou only mockest,” cried the Clod ;
“Dost see the shrunken seed and sod ?
When all is dead, yes, cursed Cloud !
Thou’lt grant us then a snowy shroud.
Thy Pilot hath no loving hand,
No care for this our thirsty land ;

He steers thee through the scorching skies,
So near us, but to tantalize !”

At these hard words a broad red flame
Lit up the heaven's face with shame
As homeward, cursing like the Clod,
With crackling steps, the farmer trod ;
While, wearied out with constant pray'r,
The priest sat silent in despair.

Then down the great sun, golden dressed,
Sank softly into crimson rest ;
And when at night all others slept,
An old man to the hill-top crept,
And cried, when he no clouds could see :
“ Thy will be done ; I trust in Thee.
Thou takest little much to give,
And lettest die that more may live ;
Each loser Thou dost recompense
With bounteous beneficence !”

And as the old man sat at ease
With arms at rest upon his knees,
A darkness gathered all around,
Until the barren hill was crowned
With heavy clouds, and drops of rain
Fell fast upon the earth again.

Then rose he with a beaming face,
And down the hill, with tott'ring pace
But firm and trusting spirit, went ;
While sweetest penetrating scent
Flew heav'nward from the happy ground,
Enriching all the air around.

Lo ! when at length the morning broke,
And all the discontented woke,
The falling rain and running rills
Made music 'mong the trees and hills ;
And that poor cursing Clod which cried,
“ Bring, bring the rain ! ” by rain had died ;
For, washed and tumbled in the flood,
It fell a shapeless mass of mud.

Perchance some thinking Clod has prayed
Impatiently, as it, for aid ;
And had he gained his dear desire,
It might have proved as dread and dire.

VIII.

Rock and Root.

O'ER lofty cliff a huge Rock hung,
And closely to the bold brink clung,
While by his side a little tree,
A sapling oak, grew modestly.
Beneath the ground oak's Root stretched out
And wandered ev'rywhere about.

One day in Summer, saunt'ring round
Between the Rock and fertile ground,
The Root found out that Rock was rent,
And straightway through the crevice went.

“Ho ! who comes there ?” the Rock ex-
claimed ;
“Beware, I am for strength so famed,
That all before me quake and quail,
And none against me can prevail.”

“Good Mister Rock, I am a Root ;
A little, tiny, tender shoot

From off the sapling oak which grows
And rubs against you when wind blows.
Pray, Mister Rock?"—

“Avaunt! I’m firm!
Get out at once, you weakling worm.”

“Oh pray, good Rock. oh, pray protect
A tender Root! Pray don’t reject
My simple prayer. for ’tis in vain
I try to get me back again!
I’m nothing bold and naught defiant;
You’ll find me dutiful and pliant;
So noiselessly I’ll wander here
You scarce will know that I am near.”

“Get out!” again the Rock exclaimed;
Root thought she should be killed or maimed,
But only sound, through crack and rent,
Reverberating, rolling went;
So, growing bold and gaining strength,
She raised herself and stretched her length
Still further in the tempting groove,
And here and there began to move.

Then came a threat as loud as thunder.
She thought the Rock would rend asunder;

But no, it ended as before
In empty noise and nothing more ;
And all the dreadful, deaf'ning din
Did only cleave wide clefts within,
Thus opening to her inspection
Fresh flaws in every direction ;
While wandering both in and out
She found weak places all about,
And laughed that in her innocence
She e'er had heeded such pretence.

But when she thought of her oak-tree,
Which she, poor blind thing, ne'er could
see ;

How torn, ill-treated, bruised, and gashed
Its boughs and leaves were as they dashed,
With ev'ry tempest's sudden shock,
Against the cruel crushing Rock ;
She swelled with anger, and each limb,
As stout as it before was slim,
With great strength grew, till ev'ry hour
Her courage waxing with her power,
She cried at length ;—

“Now, Mister Rock,
Prepare for a terrific shock.
You've injured my poor oak above,
And me no mercy shown nor love,

So from this cliff's great giddy height
I hurl you now with all my might !”

See toppling o'er, and downward dashing,
The rending Rock with deaf'ning crashing ;
And standing, safely held on high,
The oak against the sunny sky.

IX.

The Lad and his Ladder.

A CLEVER Lad, with enterprise,
Which difficulty aye defies,
Beneath a tree that grew so high
It seemed to touch the very sky,
Stood gazing at the blossoms bright,
Which hung within his longing sight.

“ A Ladder I must make,” he cried ;
“ I’ll make it wholly, stave and side ;
I’ll fell the straightest, tallest tree
That in the forest I can see ;
I’ll bring it home and work away
Most diligently, ev’ry day.”

And so the Lad, with burning will,
Commenced his task and tried his skill ;
About the woods began to roam,
Then felled his tree and brought it home.
He sawed with all his might and main
Until the tall tree dropped in twain ;

Each half he shaped with biting blade,
And soon the Ladder's sides were made ;
Then bored he holes through, one each
foot,
And strong round staves within them put.
"The Ladder's made !" at last he cried,
And long he viewed his work with pride ;
But faults he soon began to find ;
First this, then that, not to his mind ;
It was not straight, and stood not plumb,
In short, it must to pieces come.
Each side he would re-form and shave,
And alter ev'ry hole and stave.

He sought the carpenters around,
And 'mong them many fancies found,
For each of them, to his dismay,
Made ladders in a diff'rent way.
In learned books he also sought,
But, like the carpenters, they taught
How many strange perplexing ways
Were ladders made in olden days.

Confused, but with determined will,
And trusting to his native skill,
He seized his auger, saw, and plane,
And boldly set to work again,

Until the whole was straight and plumb,
And ev'ry blemish overcome.

Then gazing at it where it lay,
A perfect Ladder in its way,
For just a moment, p'r'aps, he thought
No better could be made or bought ;
But soon a watching eye could trace
Contentment wanting in his face.
He seemed with sudden fancy thrilled,
With some new inspiration filled,
For first he musing, swift words muttered,
And then determined, boldly uttered :
"I'll carve it ; yes, whate'er betide,
I'll carve it richly, stave and side."

So o'er the wood his pencil ran,
Until was traced the dainty plan,
And then with chisel sharp and fine
He fashioned flowers, fruit and vine,
Till ev'ry space, with beauty spread,
His eye entranced and fancy fed.

His task performed, and justly proud,
"'Tis perfect now," he cried aloud ;
Then gazing, puzzled, where he'd laid it,
Began to wonder why he'd made it.

But soon the tree which grew so high,
It seemed to touch the very sky,
And all the beauteous blossoms bright
Which hung before his longing sight,
Rushed rapidly upon his brain,
And roused his dead desire again.

Lo ! when the Ladder long was raised,
And he, thereon, about him gazed,
The blossom bright had passed away,
With all its colours bright and gay ;
And vainly there he stood and searched,
Upon the Ladder's summit perched.

To this my moral pray attend ;
Beware lest Means supplant the End.

X.

Working and Waiting.

WHAT work the toiling trees had done
 Since first they felt the wakening sun
 Of welcome Spring. Ten thousand buds
 From ev'ry bough now fell in floods
 Of graceful green ; while fresh fair flowers
 Burst forth to scent the secret bowers,
 Where birds, with nests of needy young,
 Sat proudly perched, and watched and sung.

When thus Creation's heart was rife
 With lavish love of mother-life,
 King Sun to Sunray said, " My child,
 'Tis time to cease thy wand'rings wild,
 And working, win, by patient toil,
 Fresh wealth and beauty from the soil.
 Right royal rank indeed is mine ;
 A Prince's proud position thine ;
 But never was there known or seen
 A Sunray who has idle been.

Attention pay to this I ask,
And take, as thine apprentice task,
The charge of one small seed which lies
And basks in brightest southern skies,
Beneath the warm and shelt'ring wall
That guards the garden near yon Hall."

"I see it, Sire, and well will strive
To tend the seed and make it thrive.
My chiefest care I'll gladly give—
My very life, to make it live."

So, steadfastly, Sunray began
The smooth gray seed to scorch and scan,
Until it seemed to burn and blaze
Beneath his bright and glowing gaze.
But all in vain, for nothing came
From all his fierce and fiery flame ;
The stubborn seed unquickened lay,
And mocked the might of royal Ray.

When Sunray noticed, day by day,
The seed unchanged in any way,
He lost his self-sufficient air,
And softened his defiant stare ;
His potent pow'r began to doubt—
For friends to help him gazed about—

Lost faith, and felt no might could make
The sleeping senseless seed awake—
Grew desperate, and said in ire,
“Thou hast deceived me, Sun, my Sire.”

While thus he fumed and fretted, came
A withered, whistling wight, whose name
Was Wind. He puffed each wrinkled cheek,
And thus to Ray began to speak :
“If thou wouldst with thy work succeed,
To others thou, proud prince, must plead,
And e'en of me assistance ask
To further this thy tiresome task.”

“What !” Sunray cried, “thou cold, dry
thing :
Can Winter aid to Summer bring ?”

“It matters little, I'm away,”
Said Wind ; but Sunray bade him stay,
And asked, “If thou indeed dost know
A way to help me, prithee show.”

“If thou this little seed wouldst save,
Its home,” said Wind, “must be the grave.
Until it buried be in soil,
'Twere waste of time to wait and toil.”

An opening in the riven clay
Beside the seed inviting lay.
“Behold!” said Wind, “we need no spade ;
A grave is here all ready made.
Just one small gust, and see, ’tis gone,
Where thou ne’er more canst gaze upon
Thy pretty seed’s fair form and face.
Brief patience have, and in its place
Thou soon shalt see so sweet a sight,
’Twill make thee tremble with delight.”

But Sunray would no promise heed ;
For, sad at loss of his dear seed,
He stirless stood, astonished, dazed,
And on the deep black chasm gazed
Till Sun arrived at close of day,
And kindly led his child away.

When Sunray in the morning came,
His face was glad and full of flame,
For Sun had said, “Who would be great
Must, humbly trusting, work and wait ;
That none can get who will not give ;
And seeds must die ere they can live.”

Thus Sunray, full of hope, once more
Bright beams of fire began to pour

So strongly on this special spot
That all the earth around grew hot.
Though birds, with madding rapture sang,
Till high in heav'n their music rang ;
Though lilac and laburnum gay
So sweetly waved their arms in play ;
No wiles could wean him from his work,
Nought tempt him e'er his task to shirk ;
And yet no change could he descry,
The earth seemed barren, bare, and dry.

One day as Sunray, thus intent,
Was on his dearest object bent,
A Cloud came creeping 'cross the blue
And shut the seed-spot from his view.
In ire he thought the Cloud most rude—
Much marvelled how it dare intrude ;
And, angered, was about to ask
How Cloud could interrupt his task,
When muffled words were wafted near
And fell on Sunray's angry ear.

“Thou silly self-sufficient Ray,
How little knowest thou the way
In which all things, by others' aid,
Are ever modelled, marred, or made.

Thy heat and light are much, I own,
But good for nothing used alone.
Friend Wind could aid thee, though so cold ;
And now again thou must be told
That I, dark Cloud, can also give
Thee help and make thy loved seed live."

"What, thou!" cried Sunray, "thou ! Alack !
A shreddy monster, bleak and black !"

"Yes, even I," said Cloud. "Good day ;
I waste my time, and will away."
"Stop, Cloud !" called Sunray, "well I know
This lifeless seed will never grow,
For I have worked with might and main
To make it sprout, but all in vain :
So now thy needful help I ask
To aid me with my hopeless task."

Then softly fell bright liquid gems,
Bedecking foliage and stems ;
Far sinking in the grateful ground,
Through crevices and depths profound,
Till Sunray's seed, now covered quite,
Lay buried deeply out of sight.

When Cloud passed on and Sunray knew
The seed was ever lost to view,

Fast failed him all the faith he had,
And standing stupefied and sad,
He feared his toil had been in vain—
Lost heart—could never work again—
Could not be sure the seed was there
Beneath the moist mould, barren, bare ;
So, troubled, tired, he travelled west,
And helpless, hopeless, sank to rest.

At morn new hope young Sunray had ;
So, gaily dancing, light and glad,
He sought the seed-sown spot, and shone
With golden, glowing glances on
The senseless soil, for well he knew
His Sire's wise words were ever true,
And he had said, "Son, persevere,
Thy rich reward awaits thee near."

Such short suspense was Sunray's fate
That not a week had he to wait,
For soon he saw a little rift
Divide the ground with gentle lift
Of crumbling clods, and through them break
A crook as white as falling flake.
No jewelled crosier were a prize
More choice than this in Sunray's eyes.

He poured upon it, from full heart,
His whole life's love—would not depart
Till lingeringly led away
By Evening at the close of day.

When Sunray with bright Morning came,
His face with passion was aflame.
What worship, love, and adoration
Fast held his heart ! What fascination,
Fixed, fateful, and beyond control,
Now filled and swayed his sated soul !

But now another glad surprise
Awaited his astonished eyes,
For in the night the crook had fled,
And two green wings uprose instead.

And soon he wondered even more,
The wings next day increased to four
And formed a cross, with central star,
Than crook or wings more lovely far.

As sped the Summer season by,
The cross, on stem uplifted high,
Sent forth new shoots and grew so tall,
It overtopped the garden wall.
A plant more stately none could see,
And none than Sunray prouder be.

Yet still another great delight
Awaited Sunray's raptured sight.
Lo ! as he gazed, the disc of green,
Which ever towards his light would lean,
Burst forth, a crown of flashing flame,
And earned its rich, right royal name
Of Sunflow'r, for, with face of fire,
It looked so like glad Sunray's Sire.

When Sunray's task was bravely done,
And all his dear desire was won,
His faithful friends he turned to find,
With wish to thank both Cloud and Wind ;
He called, and hand in hand they came ;
Both spoke and said the very same,
"Who strive with patience must excel :
Sunray has worked and waited well !"

Then Wind shook down from Cloud a bow,
And heav'n with glory was aglow.

XI.

The Fault=Film Fiend.

AH, who can find the Fault-film Fiend,
 Who skulks about securely screened
 From mortal gaze in misty dress,
 A floating form of ugliness?
 A dwarfish, crook'd, forbidding shape,
 A little Jack-o'-lantern ape,
 And yet so fell and full of power
 That, in a single silent hour,
 He can sweet beauty's self so blast
 That even Gorgons stand aghast.

He has a huge, misshapen head,
 Which lowers full of danger dread;
 His squinting eyes are greenish blue—
 Two loathsome lights of sickly hue;
 A full-fanged mouth; a long hooked nose,
 Through which a vapid vapour blows;
 A crumpled body, and within
 A horrid heart, so stained with sin,

Its blackness bursts the misty dress,
And manifests its wickedness ;
Two wrinkled, withered, wretched wings,
And legs, poor stunted, wriggling things,
Not often used, for through the air
The Fault-film Fiend floats ev'rywhere ;
Long waving arms and falling fingers,
On each of which the film-drop lingers.

See ! even now the foul Fiend flips
From off his filthy finger-tips
The fault-film in the eager eye
Of pretty Maiden passing by.

Mark well how changed her visage grows
As all her joys appear as woes.
Dissatisfaction fills her face,
And steals away its simple grace.
The lovely rose within her grasp
She gazes on as 'twere an asp ;
Each spot and speck before her eyes
Is magnified ten times its size.
The beauty which she blessed with tears,
She ridicules with taunts and sneers.
Nor form nor colour, sound nor scent,
Can give her cankered soul content.

The cruel film so closely clings
That Fault-fiend gladly claps his wings.
He hugs his happy heart, and floats
With widely gaping eyes, and gloats
O'er mirthless Maid, because his spell
Has worked so wonderfully well ;
While ever from his finger-tips
The filthy, fatal fault-film drips.

You know the Fault-fiend now, my friends ;
So when you see his finger-ends,
Just watch which way the fault-film flies,
Lest it should fall in your fair eyes.

XII.

The Shell's Two Sides.

FOUR figures I distinctly see
Beneath yon dense outspreading tree.
The first, most beautifully bright
And radiant, in garment white,
Is Truth, and 'gainst the tree she stands
With outstretched arms, and in her hands
A Shell she holds, while to the skies
She raises high her heav'nly eyes.

Beside her, with dishevelled hair,
Stands Discord : in her face despair
And discontent a dwelling find,
Fit signs of her malicious mind.

I also see, in armour bright,
Two Knights, as fit for fatal fight
As e'er in battlefield were seen.
Their plumes are coloured red and green.

Now Discord takes Sir Knight in red,
And bids him bare his vizored head,

Then turn his eyes to Truth, and tell
The form and fashion of the Shell.
“’Tis round and rough,” at once he said.

“Stand back !” cried Discord. “Come in-
stead
Sir Knight in green, and truly tell
The form and fashion of the Shell.”
But ere he had a chance to see
She turned it swiftly, cunningly.

“’Tis smooth and hollow,” cried the Knight.
“How now, Sir Knight in red ! thy sight
Is waxen dim ; when foe draws near
He will not fear thy sword and spear.”

Then answered he, Sir Knight in red,
His face convulsed with anger dread :
“Thou liest ! thou Sir Knight in green.
My eyes are bright and clear and keen.
The Shell is rough and round, I swear
By Heav’n and by my lady fair !
Get thee to horse ; within this hour
My sword and spear shall prove their power.”

“Stay, stay !” cried Discord, and she led
Th’ enraged, reluctant Knight in red

To gaze once more upon the Shell.
Lo ! how his furious, fierce face fell.

“ ’Tis smooth and hollow !—I’m betrayed ;
Mine eyes to me have traitors played.
Sir Knight in green, although I choke,
I eat the angry words I spoke ;
But if it be thy pleasure still
To fight, I’m ready ; have thy will.”

“ Sir Knight in red,” then Discord said,
“ If eyes be false, try ears instead ;
Bow down thine head and listen well ;
What hearest thou within the Shell ?”

“ I hear the roar of distant sea
And far-off forest trees,” said he.

“ Come thou on now, Sir Knight in green ;
Thou, who with eyes hast rightly seen,
Whose senses are so bright and clear ;
Bow down and listen with thine ear.”
But ere he had drawn near, once more
She turned the Shell as ’twas before.

“ ’Tis round and rough indeed,” said he ;
“ I’m blind and dazed, Sir Knight, like thee ;
But when thou sayest distant seas
Are heard, and far-off forest trees,

Within this Shell, thou liest then !
I swear by Heav'n, before all men,
Not e'en the faintest murmurs dwell
Within that rough and rounded Shell."

Enraged arose Sir Knight in red,
And fierce and furious he said :
" Sir Knight in green, now do I see
How wantonly thou mockest me.
The Shell, I say, is rough and round,
And filled with sea and forest sound.
Thou liest doubly ! and I swear
That thou shalt die. To horse. Beware !
If e'en my trusty spear should fail,
This sharp steel sword shall pierce thy mail."

Then calm, benign, with loving mien,
Truth chid the Knights both red and green,
And turned the Shell on either side
As either heard, as either eyed ;
Then bade them angry wrangling cease,
And journey onward home in peace.

Abashed, the Knights struck hands, and went
Each one his way with thought intent.

XIII.

The Splendid Sparrow.

A SHABBY Sparrow saw one day
A Peacock proud, with plumage gay,
O'er lordly lawn, with princely pride,
Strut haughtily with stately stride ;
And soon began to fret and pine
For feathers glittering and fine.

Her sombre suit, before so prized,
She now most thoroughly despised.
Her tiny form and tripping gait
She also now thought things to hate.
The Peacock gay, with tail outspread,
Had turned her silly little head,
And filled it with insanity—
An overwhelming vanity!

Such strides at first she strove to take,
They strained her legs and made them
ache.
On high her tiny head she poked
Like Peacock's till she nearly choked,

Then aped a supercilious air,
And gazed about with vacant stare.

She also gathered far and wide
Fine feathers, gaily, richly dyed,
And dressed herself in them so smart,
With such consummate, cunning art,
That ev'ry bird which on her gazed
Was wonder-struck and most amazed.

How had she gained her gorgeous dress,
Not e'en the wisest Owl could guess ;
And how she'd grown to such a size,
Not e'en the Eagle could surmise.

The Sparrows she had known before
Her pride would let her know no more ;
The bright blue Bird which flits and gleams
O'er spotted fish in silver streams,
Although he bears a royal name,
She thought beneath her lofty aim ;
The Robin and the Bullfinch she
Now gazed upon but could not see.

But how much had this glory cost,
What had she gained, what had she lost ?
The truth, indeed, too well she knew,
For many weary miles she flew

To fetch a feather, fettered by
The quills which scarce would let her fly ;
And still she sought for plumage gay
In which she might herself array.
All day she wished and sighed " Oh ! dear,
I would that flowers feathers were,
Then I with ease my dress could win,
And not be starved and get so thin."

Ah ! sad it is, and sadly true,
She thin and thinner daily grew.
On dress her mind was wholly bent,
On dress her time was wholly spent.
Of seeds she seldom had a taste ;
And when she ate, she ate in haste.

The birds with whom she fed before
Would let her feed with them no more.
They chased her, pluck'd her feathers out,
Bestrew'd her gaudy plumes about,
And shrieked and chattered in her ears
Unwelcome taunts and saucy jeers,
Until it seemed her life would end
With neither feathers, food, nor friend.

A secret had this Sparrow gay :
She loved a handsome, blue-winged Jay. .

To win him was her wish most dear,
And have him always sitting near.
For him she starved and dressed and puffed
Herself so wondrous large, and stuffed
Her skinny skeleton with down
From tip of tail to top of crown.

With wily art, most strange to say,
She won at length the cunning Jay,
And perched together on a twig,
They danced a merry marriage jig.

Forgetful of her false attire,
Her spirits growing high and high'r,
She flapped her wings, when down, alas !
Her feathers fine fell on the grass ;
And thus deprived of all her dress,
She stood in naked ugliness.

Astonished, dumb seemed all around ;
A painful peace, without a sound.
At last the Jay this silence broke,
And smiling bitterly thus spoke :

“ So I'm beguiled and cheated, Miss ;
Full dearly you shall pay for this.

In vain you've spent your pains and time ;
Your life must expiate this crime.
'Tis death alone such guilt atones,
And when you're dead, I'll pick your bones."

With that he raised his cruel head,
And when it fell, his bride was dead.

XIV.

Sun=Seekers.

COME, fly with me on fancy's wings,
And I will show thee wondrous things ;
Such could not happen here, at home,
Within the sight of Paul's great dome.

Come, fly o'er forest, hill, and lea,
Far o'er the flashing, foaming sea,
As far as we can fly away
From what we meet with ev'ry day ;
And there shall we a nation see,
Just such an one as ours might be ;
Save in religious aspirations,
Which differ from all other nations ;
Except, perhaps, the Parsee race,
Who bow before the day-king's face.

These people, too, the Sun adore,
Their heav'n it is when life is o'er ;
And yet its glorious, glowing sheen,
These worshippers have never seen ;

Its colours only they descry,
As through a prism, in distant sky.
Blue, red, and yellow, these three all
Upon the fertile island fall,
Dividing it in countries three
As equally as well might be—
Cerulea and Rubia,
And in the middle Flavia.

Cerulians see all things blue ;
Through red the Rubians all view ;
While Flavians, indeed, declare
There's nought but yellow in the air.

Each country also holds most dear
The creed that none can Sun draw near,
Except along the path of light
Which each declares alone is right.
The Flavians hate blue and red ;
The Rubians all yellow dread ;
Ceruleans hate red and yellow,
And each hates heartily his fellow.

Their bitter bigotry they show
E'en to the faultless flow'rs which grow.
Ceruleans think roses rank ;
While Rubians call daisies dank ;

And Flavians, the violet
The foulest flower ever met.

They walk about in tinted clothes,
And each his neighbour's colour loathes.
Ceruleans of strictest sect
Will ev'rything but blue reject,
While Flavians in yellow dress,
And both the Rubians distress.

A Sage among them once appeared,
But he was laughed at, hooted, jeered.
Because he told them, when they died
And passed through prism to Sun's own side,
That there no colour e'er could be,
But all would blend in harmony ;
That Heav'n would all the hues absorb
To form one bright eternal orb ;
That Sun would not one hue select,
And others utterly neglect ;
Nor any drive from that wide door
Through which, at birth, they passed before.
That when they through the pure prism passed,
All would in death unite at last.

Ceruleans and Rubians
Combined, and all the Flavians,

To scout the Sage who dared to teach
Thoughts equally abhorred by each ;
That all distinctions should have end,
And red with blue and yellow blend,
They deemed a heresy so dire
Might well arouse their righteous ire.
That he who taught it ought to die,
And like a dog unburied lie.

Each stoutly held his own bright hue
To be the only right and true ;
The only colour Heav'n could be,
The only colour saints would see.

In vain the Sage declared the light
Which, after death, should meet their sight,
Would not be yellow, blue, or red,
But white and glorious instead—
A pure and everlasting blaze
Of beautiful love-blended rays !

“ He speaks,” said they, “ but to deceive ;
We will not such wild words believe.”

And yet the Sage alone was right,
Who saw, beyond, the one true Light.

XV.

Servants of the Unseen.

ONE dusky ev'ning dozing, dumb,
I watched my Fingers four and Thumb.
Upright they stood upon my hand,
A dismal, discontented band ;
Like little men they seemed to me
In my half-conscious reverie.

I asked them why they looked so glum,
And answered me the angry Thumb :

“ These Fingers four I'll help no more ;
I'm growing sadly stiff and sore .
With daily drudgery and work,
Which these fine fellows slyly shirk.
If there be aught to lift or lay,
' Come, Thumb, come, Thumb,' at once they
say.
Whenever there is work to do,
'Tis 'Thumb, come, Thumb, we must have
you.'

I'll be determined, bold, and brave,
And live no longer serf and slave.
I'll make a stout and stubborn stand
Against this hard, exacting band ;
And when they next cry out for Thumb,
They'll call in vain—I will not come.”
With that he tossed his head in air,
And scowled a dread, defiant stare.

The little tyrant's tragic style
Amused me, and I watched a while,
That I more narrowly might scan
The sturdy, strong, short, stout, small man,
Who stood so sulky, stubborn, mute,
Like rock, relentless, resolute.

Soon Finger-first the silence broke,
And thus to Thumb serenely spoke :
“ Good sir, 'tis true you have to bear .
Of labour far the largest share ;
But you mistake when you suppose
That we are authors of your woes,
That us you serve, and that the work
You have to do is what we shirk.
We willingly perform our part,
Which is not one of strength, but art.

And know you not who serves his brother
Is working chiefly for another ;
An Unseen Master, wise and just,
Whom we not only love and trust,
But gladly give both strength and skill
Ungrudgingly, to work his will ?

“ ’Twere folly for us all to strike
Because we are not born alike ;
Because you, Thumb, are short and strong,
And I am lanky, lean. and long ;
And you, Fourth-Finger, are so small ;
And you, the Second, are so tall :
Or shall the rest of us repine
Because Ring-Finger is so fine,
And call the Unseen Master cruel
Because he gives not each a jewel,
Nor girdles us with golden wealth
Besides our happiness and health ? ”

“ Come, Thumb, your heart is good and
kind ;
Think better of it—change your mind.”
Depend upon it, compensations
Must equalise all occupations ;
All joy is meted out with care
That ev’ry one may have his share.

Your strength ! how would you like to lose
The power you disdain to use ?
Your liberty to move about !
You would not be this boon without ? ”

“ Our every action doubtless tends
To higher aims and nobler ends
Than we can comprehend or see ;
But through the wondrous mystery
A bright truth breaks, on which we rest,
That he who loves his Master best
Of selfish thoughts takes little heed,
And helps his neighbour when in need.
We Fingers then must aid each other,
And ev’ry one to each be brother.”

“ ’Tis true ! I feel it,” Thumb then said ;
“ Good Finger-first, pray, scratch my head.”

XVI.

Moth or Man.

A MOTH most beautiful and bright,
In colours crimson, blue, and white,
Sits sleeping, as the setting sun
Proclaims the day's departure done.
Behold the beauty sitting there
On bark of birch so white and fair.
See how he spreads his silken wings,
And from his seat of silver springs.
Come, let us with the bright one wend,
And watch his life from end to end.

Through silent shades and gloomy glades
He flies as fire of evening fades ;
And listen !—as he flits along
He hums a happy little song,
Which thrills all through the summer night :
“ I love the light ! I love the light ! ”

See ! now he trembles, hovers, stops,
And down among the herbage drops.

A light arrests him, soft and pure ;
It is the Glowworm's lovely lure.
With eager haste he scans her o'er,
Then turns aghast, and looks no more.

“Alas !” cries he, “that there should be
Such beauty and deformity
Together linked !” then spreads his wings,
And upward in the soft air springs,
Singing again with all his might :
“I love the light ! I love the light !”

A flirting Firefly next he spies,
And after her sends love-sick cries :
“O bright and beautiful creation,
Pray gratify my admiration.
Enchanting vision ! stay a while,
And cast upon me one sweet smile.
I love thee ! O thou starry sprite,
Be thou my bride, my love, my light !”

The Firefly, flattered, first consents,
Then fickle grows, regrets, repents,
And stretching out impatient wings
Flies far away ; but still Moth sings
All through the silent summer night :
“I love the light ! I love the light !”

A cottage candle next he sees
Alight and shining through the trees.
With sudden joy he quivers, starts,
And toward the flame impatient darts :
But bumping 'gainst the window pane,
Discovers all his efforts vain,
Until, with faint, fast-failing strength,
He finds an open door at length.

“ Oh, what a glorious glow ! ” says he ;
“ Now have I found felicity ! ”
And round and round the fatal flame
He whisks and whirls with lover's aim.

Unheeding, bright the candle burns,
While he is bold and coy by turns.
But see ! enamoured of its rays,
He swiftly flies to kiss its blaze ;
And now he flutters, falls, and faints,
Recovers, rises, makes complaints,
And ends by trying might and main
To burn and scorch himself again.
But soft and sympathetic fingers
The madman capture as he lingers,
And carry him beyond the door,
Where he can see the light no more.

Then off once more through summer's night
He flies, and sings, "I love the light!"

Anon he sees on high, afar,
A shining, solitary Star.
"To thee," cries he, "I'll fly. My way
Shall be along thy guiding ray.
All earthly pleasures I will leave,
Since they seduce but to deceive.
Yon bright, pure Star which shines above
Shall be my only hope and love."

On, on he flies o'er hill and heath
And wood, until he sees beneath
A little lake, all calm and clear,
And lo! his love, his Star, quite near.
He hovers o'er the wondrous sight,
And thrills and trembles with delight;
Then stops and says, "Can this thing be?
My Star come down from heav'n to me?"

A Water-Beetle flitting by
Declares it true, and bids Moth fly
Straight after him, and boldly dash
With one superb, delicious splash;
Tells Moth he ne'er can reach his Star,
Which shines away so very far;

That, knowing this, for his own sake
The Star itself within the lake
Has condescended now to live,
And waits, its love and light to give.

See, down the Beetle boldiy dives,
And after him the Moth arrives.

Deceived again, and well-nigh drowned,
He strives, and rises with a bound.
A Trout, who sees the tempting bait,
Comes up and snaps—but just too late.

Now Moth, recovered from his fright,
Still once more sings, “ I love the light !
I love the light ! and till I die
Toward yon heav’nly Star I’ll fly.”

Ascetic grown, on, on he goes,
And blames the world for all his woes ;
On, heav’nward on, with upturned eyes,
In faith full, firm and fast he flies ;
But strange ! the setting Star now leads
Him nearer earth as he proceeds,
And spite of will and inclination,
He follows down its declination,
Until he gently lights upon
The earth, and lo ! his Star is gone.

No sorrow wrings the Moth's small heart
When thus constrained from Star to part,
For sitting at his very side
He finds a fascinating bride ;
A Moth most beautiful and bright,
With colours crimson, blue, and white.

Now list ! His song again, how clear !
“ I love the light which brought me here,
The light which led me from above,
The one unchanging light of love.”

XVII.

The Crafty Crab.

ONE burning, breathless Summer's day,
When ships and sails slept in the bay,
And from the sea not e'en a sigh
Fell flutt'ring on the shore to die,
I lay in rocky shadow cool
And watched a pure pellucid pool.

What wealth was there of form and hue ;
What wondrous ocean-weeds there grew,
What beauteous beings, in its bed,
Sat still in state, or swiftly sped.

I cannot tell how long my eyes
Pored o'er this peerless Paradise,
But as I gazed I saw a Shrimp,
A little mischief-making imp,
In conversation with a Crab.
A Hermit with the gift of gab ;
A crafty, cruel one was he,
Whose thoughts were gore and gluttony,

And cunningly he chose to dwell
In peaceful whelk or winkle shell,
Concealing thus his crooked claws,
His ugly form and savage jaws.

He whispered to the Shrimp, "Go, find
A Goby hungrily inclined ;
Just say if he will swim here fast,
A Whelk will give him good repast ;
Persuade him there is nought to fear,
That I'm his friend, and bring him here."

So Shrimp the sneak ran roaming round
Until the little fish she found.
She dare not look in Goby's eye
The while she told her tempting lie,
But bade him hurriedly make haste
If he the Whelk's repast would taste.

So little Goby flipped his tail,
And after Shrimp began to sail,
Until they came to where the Crab
Sat resting on a rocky slab.

He said, "Dear Goby, I'm not well,
So weak I scarce can raise my shell ;
We wretched Whelks have no defence
Save heavy homes of concrete dense.

We have to climb and creep and crawl,
While you flit nimbly over all ;
I tell you we bear many a rub"—

"All right," said Goby, "where's the grub?"

"Ah! true," the treach'rous Crab replied,
"'Tis here already by my side ;
This Limpet luscious you may eat
If you can knock him off his seat."

But Goby gazed and shook his head ;
"It is impossible," he said.

"No," Crab replied, "'tis but a knack
To turn him over on his back ;
Your head beneath his shell first slip,
Then give a smart and sudden tip,
When over he will quickly turn,
And you the deadly dodge will learn."

"Hallo!" said Shrimp, "why do you start,
And such a distance from us dart?"

"I thought," gasped Goby. "thought I saw
Beneath Whelk's shell a cloven claw ;
But why don't you as well as I
To turn the Limpet over, try?"

“ You foolish fish, do you suppose,
With these long needles from my nose,
That I could put my head below
The Limpet’s shell and it not know ? ”

“ Poor little fish, he’s frightened quite ! ”
Cried Crab, still crouching out of sight.

To Goby, whom no foe could daunt,
This was a subtle, stinging taunt.
With fury fell his bright eyes flashed,
Then darting, ’neath the Limpet dashed.
Alas ! it closed upon his head,
And Goby instantly was dead.

From Whelk-shell then the Crab came out,
And seizing Shrimp, first danced about,
Then fell upon the Goby’s corse,
And ate it up without remorse.

XVIII.

Faith and Faithless.

ON topmost twig of tallest tree,
 Its very tip, which none could see,
 Two baby buds were born and grew
 Like twins, exact in form and hue ;
 In views of life, aversions, aims ;
 And Faith and Faithless were their names.

Firm friends and trustful were these two,
 Like lovers, they would kiss and woo ;
 Would whisper little laughing tales,
 And tell them to the gadding gales ;
 Would stretch themselves, and, growing strong,
 Sing loudly, lustily, a song
 In praise of Spring's sweet sap which filled
 Their trembling veins, and through them thrilled,
 A subtle, spirit-searching wine.
 Like joyous juice from southern vine.
 They sang and danced in sunny skies,
 A sinless pair in Paradise !

All ministered to their delight.
A million minstrels, day and night,
Made merry music, till the air
Was filled with gladness ev'rywhere ;
Bright bands of insects flitted round,
Each uttering a joyful sound,
So soft and sweet, like pipe of Pan,
Or note of harp Æolian !
While on slim sprays which swung and swayed,
Superbly plumaged songsters played,
And twittered pretty pipes and trills
With widely gaping, golden bills.

Below the silver streamlet's dash.
Down rocky falls, like cymbal's clash,
Kept time with never-failing beat,
And made the concert quite complete !

Thus lived these buds till large leaves grown ;
They watched the world from their high throne,
And saw the scented Summer rise,
In gold and gems and glist'ning guise,
To pour on earth profusive showers
Of costly, many-coloured flowers :
And Autumn, robed in russet suit,
Appear with ripe and rosy fruit

To bring the branches, blossomless,
Rich recompense for their distress.

So sat these twin leaves side by side,
With not a wish unsatisfied,
Till Winter came and Wind grew cold,
When both the leaves felt growing old.
They found their forms were losing grace,
And each observed the other's face
Was withered, wrinkled, all awry,
Bespotted, sapless, wizened, dry ;
And when they tried to sing or speak,
The sound was like a rusty squeak.
They saw strange changes all around ;
The ripe fruit falling to the ground ;
The flowers fading fast away ;
The herbage drooping in decay ;
And, which distressed them most of all,
The leaves, their fellows, die and fall.

When Faithless saw the woeful sight,
The baneful, universal blight,
His heart was filled with hardened hate
Against the fatal foeman Fate.
He feared to follow leaves which died,
And fell from branches by his side.

He longed to live and ever dwell
Where all he wanted went so well.
He wondered if there were no way
By which he could cheat Death and stay
Securely seated near the sky,
And never differ, never die.
He wrapped himself around the spray,
And clung convulsively all day,
With terror trembling, lest a breath
Of Winter's wind should be his death.

Now Faith was fearless, had no care,
Enjoyed the cheerful, cool, crisp air.
At Faithless and his foolish fears,
Flung laughter long, with jokes and jeers.
“Why fume,” he said, “and fly at Fate?
Why heap upon it so much hate?
See, what a strange, unsightly thing
You look screwed closely up to cling
To this weak twig, and vainly try
To 'scape decay and Fate defy.
Why will you not now take your share
Of all that still is left so fair?
See where our brothers on the ground
Are racing, romping round and round,
And dancing with the whirling Wind,
To all your black forebodings blind.

Thus flitting fetterless and free,
Most grand and glorious must be !
When it were happier to die
Who would the will of Fate deny ?
Come, good friend Fate, to take or give,
I am content to die or live."
With these last words his slight stem snapped,
And, downward floating, gently lapped
In soft sweet air, he joined the band
Of leaves who lived on joyous land.

All Winter Faithless closely clung,
And, one lone leaf on tree-top, hung ;
But what a musty, mouldy thing
He was when came the sweet, fresh Spring !

And as the buds began to swell,
They drove him off, and down he fell !

XIX.

Joy's Jewel.

COME, children, catch my hands and haste,
For not a moment must we waste
If we would see the splendid show,
And Joy and his just judgments know.
Come, dance along, and let your feet
With feather-fall be fast and fleet ;
For we must neither rove nor rest
Until we reach the mountain's crest.

Arrived, a sight superb we saw ;
It struck my little ones with awe ;
For on the hill's high summit stood
The prince of princes, " Joy the good ! "
The mighty monarch, " Joy the Just ! "
Before whom mortals are as dust.
Erect he stood with easy grace,
Beatitude beam'd o'er his face,
And from his eyes a sweet light shone
Too glorious to gaze upon.

He stood in garb of snowy white,
So luminous with silv'ry light,
That e'en the shortest, shyest glance
Made heavy hearts with gladness dance.

In right hand raised he held to view
A Jewelled Gem of heav'nly hue,
And from it flashed long, dazzling rays,
Like lightning's vivid, blinding blaze.
So beautiful was it and bright
That all around it seemed as night.
The keenness of its scorching fire
Fill'd hearts and kindled hot desire.
It burnt the brain so deeply in
With overwhelming greed to win,
That in the never-ceasing strife
Were freely given wealth and life !

Now Joy, with gracious goodness moved,
Proclaimed, to any one who proved
Well worthy of it in his eyes,
That he would grant the Jewel-prize.
This offer to the world he made,
Rejecting neither race nor grade.
All welcome were to urge their prayer,
And try to win the Jewel rare.

One day the multitude, arrayed,
Tiptoed to watch the trial made,
And when they saw great waggons come,
The eager crowd were breathless, dumb.
Each waggon drawn by horses eight,
Which scarce could drag its mighty weight ;
Each waggon filled with glitt'ring gold,
Heaped up as full as it could hold.
Of waggons there were twenty-four,
And all the name of " Miser " bore.

A little, shrivelled, mean old man
Before the loads of treasure ran,
And led the way to " Joy the Good,"
Who waiting on the hill-top stood.
Arrived, obeisance Miser made,
And, waving on the waggons, bade
The drivers take the treasure by
Beneath the Judge's searching eye.

And when the wealth of gold at last
On all the weighty wains had passed,
Old Miser swiftly silence broke,
And, sanguine of success, thus spoke :
" Pray, Joy, the Jewel grant to me,
For all this shining gold you see

Is mine, and surely such success
Should have attendant happiness."

But Joy, with half-averted head,
The Jewel hid, and sharply said :
"Joy's gift was never won by wealth
Attained by stinginess and stealth."
So, grudging time and money spent,
Most miserable, Miser went.

Next came a gay and gaudy throng,
With pomp and proud procession long.
Before it rode, in crystal car,
Reclining, shining like a star,
With scintillating gems, and dress
Of lace and lavish loveliness,
A worldly woman, with both face
And form devoid of Nature's grace.
Her arms and neck surpassing fair
(Enamelled) wooed the wanton air.
Of whiter skin none could be prouder—
So wonderfully white (with powder) !
Her cheeks were pink with faintest blush—
Most beautiful (put on with brush) !
Luxuriant to look upon
Was her long hair (also put on) !

Her youthful years (just forty-eight)
Did also greatly captivate.
With listless languor soft she sighed,
And bade the driver draw aside ;
Then lighted on the smooth green grass
To watch her gay procession pass.

Cupbearers came, all marching by
With golden goblets brimming high,
Who drinking, sang, "Thee, Joy divine !
Dame Luxury doth pledge in wine."
Then passing on, a pretty group
Of dancing girls, a dainty troop,
With flitting feet and waving arms,
Displayed unstintingly their charms ;
While many minstrels sang and played,
And strains of merry music made.

When Luxury with furtive gaze
Found Joy had turned—to her amaze,
Had turned—on all her tribe his back,
With angry shrug she screamed "Alack !"
And snatching up her silken skirt,
Regained her car with curses curt ;
Then shouting imprecations shrill,
In hottest haste drove down the hill.

Next came a conqueror and host,
Of bloody battles he could boast ;
"Field Marshal Power" was he called ;
His potent name fierce foes appalled.
In front of all the host he rode
On prancing steed which proudly strode.
Saluting Joy, he wheeled about,
And watched with pride the passing rout.

Battalions brave, on foot and horsed,
In front of Joy and Power crossed.
A million men or more marched by,
Prepared at Power's beck to die ;
Or, as they much preferred, to kill
His enemies and work his will.
'Twas wonderful, the clash and clang
Of weapons through the ranks which rang.
The roll of musketry and blare
Of trumpets sounded everywhere,
While twenty thousand cannons' roar
Sent shudders through one's very core.

When all the stately show had passed,
And Power found himself left last,
He struck his spurs and followed them,
For Joy withheld the Jewelled Gem.

When we had seen the armed array,
The children questioned, "Wherefore stay?"
But well I knew while Joy remained,
Some other applicant had gained
His willing ear, and waited near
His wise and worthy words to hear.
A short suspense had we, for soon
'Twas seen who sought from Joy a boon.

A poor old Man and Maiden came.
He bent, decrepit, blind, and lame ;
She beautiful, with boundless grace,
With sympathy in her sweet face ;
With soul of love so deep and dear
Each eye that saw her shed a tear.
Upon her brow was brand of Truth ;
Her name and nature too was Ruth.

She brought the old Man up the slope,
And bade him courage have, and hope.
With guiding hand she gently led
His helpless age to Joy, and said :
" Have pity on this poor old Man,
Who sightless, joyless, bears the ban
Of poverty and hungry need
Most patiently : his sorrow heed,

And graciously the Jewel give
To him, that he with joy may live."

Her supplicating eyes she raised,
And through great tears of pity gazed
On Joy the Judge, who sentence gave.
"Sweet sister, those who strive to save
And succour poverty and pain
Alone can gift of gladness gain :
So let this Jewel ever rest
With joy upon thy ruthful breast."

XX.

Bend or Break.

ERE all the wealth of Autumn lay
In tatters, rotting in the clay ;
Ere berry-bearing boughs had shed
Their clustered burdens blue and red ;
When leafy robes to tall trees clung,
And o'er their limbs majestic hung ;
And Sun shone on the silent show,
Enriching all with golden glow,
By Beauty awed, entranced I stood
And watched a while,—my world a wood.

Beside me rose a stately Beech,
Whose vestments vied with painted peach ;
And near a graceful Birch tree grew,
Which glistened with a gem-like hue ;
While from them both their arms extended
In mid-air met and branches blended.

Beech-bough was brittle, sturdy, strong ;
Birch-bough was bending, lithe and long ;

Beech-bough was stubborn, proud, self-willed,
Birch-bough with fear and faith was filled ;
Yet both their twigs together twined
And lived firm friends and neighbours kind.

But see the Birch's silver stems
And golden leaves, like lustrous gems,
Now start and shimmer in the sun,
And gleam and glitter ev'ry one.

It is a tiny, timid Breeze,
Which tremblingly trips towards the trees.
And drenches them in sweetest scent
Of pine and flower perfumes blent.
It lips each leaf a fragrant kiss,
And bids it dream of deeper bliss ;
Then each dear dreamer softly shakes
Until it heaves a sigh and wakes.

But now the Wind with ruder rush
Breaks boist'rously the happy hush,
And blows rough blasts with sudden shocks
Until bright Birch-bough reels and rocks.

Stern, stiff and still the Beech-bough rests,
And jeers the Wind with jokes and jests,
And bids the bending Birch no more
Bow down the tyrant Wind before.

Still on Wind blows with might and main.
A hissing, shrieking Hurricane,
Attacking with such fell intent
That all the lovely leaves are rent
From ev'ry tree and rudely shed,
A splendid stream of gold and red.

It was a bold and bitter blast ;
A cruel, keen Iconoclast !

Birch-bough before it bowed and bent ;
Beech-bough was firm, would not assent,
But trembled all along its length,
With fibres strained beyond their strength,
Until it creaked and cracked and crashed,
And torn and tortured downward dashed.

As I passed by another day,
All rent and rotting Beech-bough lay.
No rage was there nor noisy rout ;
No tempest tossed the trees about,
But Birch-bough drooped with mournful woe
O'er Beech-bough broken dead below.

Be not too obstinate, my friend ;
Let dead boughs break, the live should bend.

XXI.

Fuel or Fire.

WHEN Christmas cold with Winter came,
And friends flocked round the cheerful flame,
I sat before some burning Logs
Which blazed upon my bright fire-dogs.

Beside me children, girls and boys,
Discarding tales, and dolls, and toys,
Stood open-mouthed and open-eyed,
And told the wondrous forms they spied ;—
Grotesque grimaces, beauteous bowers,
Caves, caverns, castles, fairies, flowers,
Great giants, ogres, ghouls, and gnomes,
High mountains, valleys, spires, and domes :
All these and more this little band,
With shout, and shriek, and pointing hand,
Distinctly saw and half believed,
Until their hearts with wonder heaved.

I sent the youngsters soon to bed,
Dropped dreamily my drowsy head,

And gazed upon the glowing scene,
Till words my ears began to glean.

“ Hiss, spit, and spurt your spiteful steam ;
Shoot skyward sparks, and glint and gleam ;
I too could burn with brilliant fire,
For lips to praise and eyes admire ;
But here, in this dark corner, I
Am ever doomed to stand and sigh.”

One Log, the last put on that night,
Lay burning with the embers bright.
I listened ;—nothing from it came
Save hissing sap and crackling flame.
Church chimes fell down the chimney wide,
And crickets chanted close beside ;
But whence the strange, mysterious sound,
Which bursts like groans from underground ?

’Twas from a sturdy two-legged Stump,
With knobs, and gnarls, and head, and hump,
Remonstrance came. He stood alone
Upon the hearth, and thus made moan :

“ So stupid ’tis to stand here still,
And nothing do but groan and grill
When I live-fire could be ; ’tis cruel
The doom which keeps me dull, dead fuel.

'Tis hard to be so near, and yet
Not able on the fire to get ;
To borrow heat which I could give,
And lifeless lie instead of live.
Here I, who ne'er from work would flinch,
Just miss my mission by an inch.
Will no good mortal hence me haul,
And let me on the fierce fire fall ?
Impatiently I long to show
How I could sparkle, burn, and glow.
It is, I vow, a fearful fate,
When one can work, to watch and wait."

"It is, indeed," I lowly muttered,
For Stump my very thoughts had uttered.

'Twas but a moment then to jump
And seize the sympathising Stump ;
To place him on the glowing fire,
And give him all his heart's desire.

At first amused, and then amazed,
I watched how busily he blazed,
And squeaked and crackled, hissed and spat,
As if his sides were filled with fat.
He shot bright sparks in all directions,
And flames and curious reflections,

Until the hall held such strange lights—
Peopled, it seemed, with dancing sprites.

And then a voice burst through the flame ;
From Log, a cinder now, it came :

“I warn you, Stump,” the old Log said,
“Who swiftest live are soonest dead.”

“So let me live, so let me die,”
Retorted Stump ;—and so thought I.

XXII.

Cloud's Combat.

THERE grew an Oak on village green,
Had many generations seen,
For 'neath its soft, wide-spreading shade,
Light-hearted, laughing children played ;
Or older grown, with frets and blisses,
Sat there and sighed or stole sweet kisses ;
While later still beneath the Oak
Some came to knit and some to smoke.

He was a lofty, strong-limbed giant,
Of all foes fearless and defiant ;
A friend of mine with whom I sat,
And had a nap or silent chat ;
Who patiently would hear and hold
The secret tales I whispering told !

The Sun has set and stol'n away
The life of one more lovely day.
All dead are Summer's slender stems,
All fled the scented flower gems ;

All gone the green, and once again
The scarlet stain of Summer slain
Has fallen on the leaves which wait
From fatal-fingered Frost their fate.

Beside my Oak I sit to-day
And watch the welkin far away.
I see a wild white Cloud appear,
And 'cross the starry sky career.
A sprite seems sheltered 'neath the shroud
Of this strange streaming shattered Cloud,
As 'gainst the falcion-moon it dashes,
And cares not for its cruel gashes.

On, on it comes, each moment wide
And wider, stretching ev'ry side,
Until my dear old Oak and I
Can see no longer starry sky,
But only mist, dark, dismal, dense,
Oppressing body, soul, and sense.

I sullen sat and cursed aloud
That black, unwelcome, chilly Cloud ;
But Oak, with philosophic sigh,
Said, " Let, I pray, the stuff go by ;
'Tis powerless to do us ill—
Can neither cut, nor crush, nor kill."

“So say you,” said the Cloud in rage :
“Now will we deadly warfare wage,
And fight for life with might and main !
To-morrow I will come again.”
On fled the Cloud far, far from sight,
While I walked homeward through the night.

The Sun rose late. Had he not wrought
Upon the Summer soil and brought
Full crops of corn and fruity wealth
To all of us with joyous health ?
’Twere well that we, who most are blest,
Should be the last to grudge him rest.

Soon came the Cloud, and as I gazed,
Secure behind my window glazed,
I saw it pour its waters out
On Oak, a perfect Waterspout !
With such a rush the rain came down,
It seemed as though the world must drown ;
So great a flood had ne’er been seen,
It covered all the common green ;
It spread so wide and rose so high,
Some sheep were drowned and pigs in sty :
It carried off a stack of hay,
And swept the village bridge away ;

Tall trees were torn up, wrung and wrenched,
Yes, e'en the ducks were draggled, drenched;
But Oak, unscathed, stood smiling there,
And shook his strong arms in the air
Till all the water shot away,
And fell about his feet in spray.

Then came a storm of huge Hailstones,
Which battered cattle, broke their bones ;
Large limbs and leaves of trees it scattered,
E'en my poor window-panes were shattered.
The villagers were all alarmed ;
But Oak stood strong, unhurt, unharmed.

Next came a Wind with wild-winged force,
Which ripped a rider from his horse ;
It blew my chamber-chimney down,
And broke the beadle's brainless crown ;
Threw down a thousand trees, and rang
The church's bells with clash and clang ;
It blew the Farmer's stacks afield,
And thrashed his sheaves of all their yield ;
But Oak, who yet knew no alarms,
Hip ! hip ! hurrah'd ! and waved his arms,
And laughed, as with wild Wind he battled,
Until his huge sides fairly rattled !

Still darker grew the angry Cloud ;
Then came a flash with thunder loud.
The Lightning struck the village spire,
And set the Squire's fine house on fire ;
It scorched my beech, broke off a bough,
And killed my one good milking-cow.
It struck the Oak, and made its mark,
A seared, scorched streak along its bark.
Still Oak but smiled and laughed, " Alack !
Good Cloud doth kindly scratch my back."

Then saw I Cloud still blacker grow,
And down drop feath'ry flakes of Snow !
They, faster falling, filled the air,
And settled softly ev'rywhere—
Upon the shattered limbs and leaves,
Upon the Farmer's scattered sheaves,
Upon the splintered village spire,
Upon the Squire's fine house on fire,
Upon the cattle, pigs, and sheep,
And on my cow, o'er which I weep !
The flakes flew down my chimney wide,
And sat around my snug fireside ;
While some straight through my window sped,
And settled on my hands and head.
They fell outside and spread a pall
O'er stunted shrubs and timber tall.

Soon Oak began to feel the Snow
A burden on his branches grow ;
So great indeed that grievous groans,
And many miserable moans,
Broke forth from 'neath the mountain white ,
For bole and branch were hidden quite ;
And now, borne down beneath the weight,
Oak found, alas ! too late ! too late !
That flakes like feathers, falling fast,
May make a wondrous load at last.
He felt in desperate despair,
The burden more than he could bear.

With sudden shock and crashing thunder
Each bough from bole was torn asunder,
And downward dashed against the ground,
A wretched wreckage all around !

The strongest, when to war they go,
Should never underrate their foe ;
For Cloud was conqueror, you see,
And Oak a dead, defeated tree.

XXIII.

The Queen's Quest.

LONG lines of leafy shadow fell
Where sat the Queen in silent spell.

As still as stone, with soft sad eyes,
She gazed upon the glorious skies.

With face upturned and form inclined,
And fingers gently intertwined,
She seemed to all things outward dead ;
As if her saintly soul had sped.
But still her senses hovered near,
The Minstrel's melody to hear ;
For his sweet strains were wings with which
She floated far to dream-realms rich !

On balcony beside her stood,
His harp in hand, her Minstrel good ;
And from the strings he struck an air
So exquisitely sweet and rare,

That not another, night nor day,
Might her devoted Minstrel play.
He changed its key, and made it flow
From shorter strings, or long or low.
He let his fingers widely range,
And harmonies would often change ;
Yet never could the Minstrel dare
To wander from her chosen air.

But ingenuity has bounds,
And harps are limited in sounds ;
E'en airs, however sweet they be,
Cloy by familiarity ;
So this they soon began to find
No longer soothed her saddened mind.
It ceased to carry off her soul
To its much-loved and longed-for goal !
For now, with wistful, wand'ring eyes—
With woeful sorrow-laden sighs,
The Queen had never perfect rest,
But seemed to have some secret Quest.

The Matrons stood in dumb dismay
And wept, and watched her waste away.
At length said one, " This Minstrel man
Make melody no longer can.

Let him depart a Minstrel mute.
Is there no fool can blow a flute?
Perchance he so might play the air
'Twould quell and calm our good Queen's
care."

Then this same Matron turned her head,
And gazing on the Minstrel said,
"Since you, good sir, no longer suit,
Some fellow find who plays the flute."

"'Tis well!" the Matrons cried; "begone
And bring this man and flute anon."
Throughout the land the Minstrel ran,
And found at length the flute and man;
First taught him how to play the air,
Then bade him to the Queen repair.

Arrived, the Matrons made him play
To drive her dismal dreams away;—
But all in vain, the Royal hand
Waved him away with cold command.

Again 'twas thought, though hope forlorn,
The music of the mellow horn
Might make the air supremely sweet,
And all their dearest wishes meet;

So forth the Minstrel set again,
And marched about with might and main,
Beseeching all if any knew
Of one who horn or trumpet blew.
At length the man with horn was found ;
The Minstrel heard its mellow sound,
Then taught the man the mystic air,
And bade him to the Queen repair.

With hopeful hearts the Matrons bade
The stranger play, and well he played ;—
But still in vain ;—with weary waive
She quittance the musician gave.

'Twas thought, again, the violin
Might sound the air so well 'twould win
The Queen's sad heart and lead her eyes,
With soft sweet gaze, to seek the skies :
So forth the Minstrel set once more
And searched the country o'er and o'er,
Proclaiming wide the queenly Quest
For him who played the fiddle best.
Then having found the man he sought,
The Minstrel brought him back to Court ;
And having taught the potent air,
Soon bade him to the Queen repair.

“Now surely,” said the Matrons round,
“This must delight her with its sound.”
But no, the Master drew his bow
With art consummate, to and fro.
And made each stretched and slender string,
Like *Prima Donna*, sweetly sing.
But lo ! the Matrons, much amazed,
Beheld the Royal finger raised ;
So, knowing well she would have peace,
They bade the famous fiddler cease.

Now, sorrow-stricken, foiled, and vexed,
They stood disheartened and perplexed.
They saw their Mistress faint and pale,
And daily failing, growing frail.
So fair a face, so sweet a mind,
With form so graceful and refined,
All loved her. To avert her death
Each would have given life's best breath.
With heavy hearts they saw her fade,
And none could soothe her, none could aid.

In silence, with beseeching eyes,
She turned at times and sought the skies ;
But not with that long look of love,
While gazing steadily above,

As was her wont, when in her chair,
She sat and heard the witching air.

While wistful Matrons waited round
And watched their Queen with grief profound,
With harp in hand, her Minstrel good,
Unbidden, mute before her stood ;
She saw some secret in him lay,
So sweetly signalled him to play.
Then through the chamber music rang,
And thus the Minstrel softly sang.

SONG.

I.

Came the cold and cruel Winter,
Wrapt in shroud of ghastly white,
Straight to my Beloved's tower,
Where he slept entranced at night,
Where I ever watched and worshipped,
Bending o'er my Beauty bright,
Came so close and knelt beside me,
Breathing, ev'ry breath a blight.
Close and closer bent above him,
Cheek to cheek ! I heard a hiss !
Well I knew relentless Winter
Killed my loved one with that kiss.

II.

Come, thou cold and cruel Winter,
Breathe upon me baneful breath,
I will bless thee if thou kiss me,
Ah ! how welcome would be death.
But cold Winter only mocked me,
Froze the fountain of my tears,
Stole my speech, and o'er my tresses
Spread the snowiness of years.
Minstrel, make me mournful music ;
Soaring with thy subtle strain,
I perchance may, reaching heaven,
See my angel once again.

It was once more the self-same air,
And ev'ry note of it a stair
To lift the sweet Queen's soul above,
Where lived her very life and love.

'Twas gloaming, at the set of sun,
When this good Minstrel's song was done.
All wondered it had worked so well ;
Most marvellously, like a spell :
For lo ! the Queen began to speak,
And tears came trembling down her cheek ;

While o'er her face, again intent,
Stole sweetest smiles of calm content.

She kissed her Matrons, ev'ry one,
And turning to the setting sun,
Gave, once again, a long, long gaze
With eyes which wore a dying glaze ;
Outstretched her arms, with eager mien,
As if to welcome one unseen ;
Then softly sighing, fell to rest,
And found at last her longed-for Quest.

And so 'tis seen these Matrons sent
Afar to find an instrument
Of subtle sweetness, clear and choice,
When lo ! 'twas near,—the Minstrel's voice.

XXIV.

Rook's Ruin.

IN early Spring, when scarce was seen
A bursting bud or bit of green,
A Rook who never nest had made,
Nor ever e'en an egg had laid,
By Nature bid, began to roam,
And wonder where to build her home.

All round the rookery she flew,
And sought the tallest trees that grew ;
From twig to twig she fleetly hopped
To find which bow the rest o'ertopped,
Determined that her nest should be
The highest on the highest tree.

When settled was the lofty site,
She set to work with all her might ;
Selected sticks to suit her mind,
With twigs entwisted them and twined ;
Flew to and fro at rapid rate,
And laboured lustily and late.

But when old Rooks her building saw,
They raised a loud, derisive caw.
“Of course the youngest know the best
How, when, and where to make a nest.”

To which she said, “Why not aspire
And build our habitations higher ?
Here health I have, and feast my eyes
On sunshine sweet and starry skies.
From dirty nests will fall no dust
On me or mine to give disgust ;
You fight may fiercely, one and all,
And not a stick on me will fall.
What can the use be, let me know,
Of building there so far below ?
It argues want of proper pride
Among the branches thick to hide ;
A nature grovelling and gross ;
A mind degraded, mean, morose ;
Such lack of pluck and enterprise
I pity, scorn, detest, despise.
Rude ridicule shall never stay
Or make me waver in my way.”

She spoke in vain. It little mattered
How long the young Rook raged and chattered ;

The old ones only shrugged their wings
And wisely talked of other things.
They sometimes wondered how the nest
Could on such tender branches rest,
And praised the plans she used to blend
And strengthen twigs inclined to bend ;
But when they thought of coming weather,
They wagged their wise old heads together.

Enthroned upon her eyrie high,
She sits in state and scans the sky.
Three little Rooks beneath her breast,
Well fed and warm, lie in the nest.
What mute maternal triumph fills
Her happy heart, and through her thrills,
As balmy-breathing breezes blow,
And rock the nestlings to and fro !

But ruder blasts are coming now,
Before them bending ev'ry bough ;
Yet mother Rook minds not the motion,
Of fear or danger has no notion ;
Casts gladsome glances all about,
And quite enjoys the noisy rout ;
Looks down upon the ancient Rooks,
Regards them with disdainful looks ;

Then thinks the shocks are rather rude,
And wishes wind were more subdued ;
Becomes alarmed, and closely clings
With clutching claws and beak and wings ;
In trepidation next has doubt
If she and Rooklets will fall out,
Or, if the cruel wind increases,
Her home will hold or dash to pieces.

Alas ! now comes a sudden blast,
And nest and Rooks are cloudward cast.
In vain the mother springs and flies,
Each fledgling, downward dashing, dies.

What wailing was there, what laments !
Too late the silly Rook repents,
And learns, who would securely rise
Can never Wisdom's words despise ;
That safety lies in lowly life ;
In elevation danger, strife.

XXV.

Bough or Brain.

WHEN Summer's sun had Winter slain,
And leaves leaped into life again,
Field flowers, fearing no more cold,
Came peering coyly through the mould,
Till, boldly bursting into bloom,
They banished all the barren gloom,
And gave to mortal eyes a gleam
Of that too dim, delicious dream
Which, ah ! so seldom chains the sense,
And leads it lovingly from hence.

Enrapt I stood, till in mine eyes,
Where tears were never wont to rise,
Some drops of joy unbidden came,
And woke me with a twinge of shame.

'Twas then, o'erwhelmed with strange delight,
A branch of blossom struck my sight ;
An apple bough, along whose length
Fresh life-sap sped with Spring-born strength ;

A cloud of colour, more like sky
When deeply tinged with evening's dye,
Than tinted flow'rets o'er it fell;
The royal raiment robed it well.

With new delight I watched each day
The wondrous cluster grow more gay;
The dew of dawn, like glowing gems,
Suspended from its dainty stems;
And when, wind-wafted, it would nod
With stately mien to sky and sod,
I thought it must some soul contain,
And o'er all other branches reign.

When warm winds wandered ev'rywhere,
And balmy breezes filled the air,
I watched Bough drop its dazzling dress,
And scatter down its loveliness,
Until where garments gay had been
Was now a sober suit of green.
It seemed indeed surpassing strange
To see so swift, complete a change.

Ambition now had seized Bough's mind;
To work with will it seem'd inclined;
Its life's great labour had begun,
So, southward stretch'd, it scanned the sun,

And all the summer season sought
The beams which fond fruition brought.

How proud was parent Apple-tree
To watch its darling prodigy ;
Of all the other Boughs was there
Not one with this could e'er compare.
Its form, its foliage, and fruit
Were wondrous fine, none could dispute.
Both Tree and Bough had but one aim,
Success in life and future fame.

I saw the apples as they hung,
And closely packed in clusters clung.
I watched them waxing ev'ry day,
And crowding in each other's way,
Until their sunny sides were grained
With pretty painted streaks, and stained.

"Magnificent !" said passers by ;
"A splendid crop !" was others' cry ;
But wise ones wagged their heads, and gazed
With pity while they faintly praised.
I knew their thoughts, for 'neath the weight
Bold Bough so stiff, so strong, so straight,
Now curved and crook'd, toward earth inclined,
Like age on staff, support to find.

But proudly Bough the burden bore,
And loved its load, and longed for more ;
Cared not how cruel was the strain ;
Ignored each warning pang and pain ;
Could not be cowed ; defied defeat ;
Would have the fruit grow ripe and sweet ;
Would never rest nor seek repose
Until the consummating close,
When every apple ripe and round
Should by approving hands be found.

Alas ! alas ! that there should lurk
A hidden harm in honest work ;
That those who bear the burden best
Should be the last to long for rest ;
Should toil along the rugged road,
Till death at length lifts off the load.

Brave Bough, whose burden ev'ry hour
Increased in size and pond'rous pow'r,
Still struggled on, until at length,
With fibres strained beyond their strength,
It snapped with sudden rent, and fell,
A wretched wreck, dead in the dell.

Poor Boughs we pardon, they are blind ;
But Men we cannot, they have mind.

XXVI.

Wind at the Wicket.

WITH pencil, paper-pad, and paint,
I paced in quest of picture quaint,
And found it basking, beaming, bright,
A scene so queer it pleased me quite.

A castle crunched by Time's rough teeth,
With twisted, tortured trees beneath ;
A wrinkled wall together bound
By knotted ivy closely wound ;
A bank o'er which together scramble
Bine, bracken, bushy broom, and bramble ;
While rushy tufts, like hair on end,
With all these forms fantastic blend.

For foreground first a Wicket-gate,
In form old-fashioned, out of date ;
A pebbled path, a patch of green,
And last, some logs with weeds between.

'Twas Autumn's reign, but Summer sweet
Had stolen back again to greet

Her pretty pining flowers, and kiss
Their lovely lips in brief, brief bliss.

My fancy fixed, I found a place
To view my picture face to face ;
And there enchanted, sat and stared
With eyes dilated, forehead bared.

By fascination, or by fate,
I gazed and gazed upon the gate,
Until at length I through it saw
A cloud of leaves, and sticks, and straw
Come hurtling on like hunted herds,
Come flying on like frightened birds.

Behind, a being strange and strong
Impelled the whirling pack along—
A being weird of wondrous life,
Who urged the cloud and stirred the strife.
With waving arms and writhing form,
And breath which blew like blast of storm,
A being clad in silv'ry hair,
Out-streaming, shining in the air ;
With legs which scarce tip-toed the ground,
Yet leapt along with lofty bound ;
With eyes of lurid, lustrous light,
And mien of mischief-making might.

In one brief moment all the roar
And whirl of rushing waifs was o'er :
The whole fell lifeless at my feet,
While at the Wicket took his seat
That being weird who to my mind
Could no one be but wilful Wind.
There sat he smiling, glancing round
At all the leafy, littered ground.
He winked his eye and whistled low,
And swayed his long legs to and fro.

While Wind upon the Wicket sat,
In broad black cloth and wide-brimm'd hat,
The parish Pastor, great his fame,
With staid and sad demeanour came.
He scarce had placed his solemn state
Within the precincts of the Gate,
When Wind leapt down and swung it wide,
And deep obeisance made beside ;
Then filled with fun, this wicked Wind
Kicked up the Pastor's tails behind ;
In strange contortions stretched his face,
And pirouetted round the place.

The Pastor nothing knew of this,
But hugged himself in holy bliss,

And thought how Providence was kind,
How reverential was the Wind.
Then pondering, his way he went,
On theologic thoughts intent.

But suddenly some spots of rain
Came down and made him turn again.
Along the path he quickly paced,
Some shelter sure to seek in haste.
He neared the Gate, 'twas open wide,
But ere he gained its other side
'Twas battered back against his nose,
His stomach, shins, and silken hose ;
And while he stood thus stunned and hurt,
His hat was trundling in the dirt.

All this did Wind with wicked smirk ;
All this was wild Wind's wilful work.

Surprised, the Pastor paused in pain,
Then patiently paced on again ;
Picked up his hat, brushed off the loam,
And disconcerted hobbled home.

Kind Providence and wilful Wind
For many months perplexed his mind.

XXVII.

Trout's Triumph.

O'ER crest and crag from mountain crown
A bonny burn comes dancing down,
Till tired it gladly glancing leaps
In peaceful pool and soundly sleeps.

Beside this pool, with cunning care,
A Spider spins her silken snare.
She wary is and weather-wise,
And can so well, from winds and skies,
Forecast the coming cloud and rain
That never weaves she web in vain.

“Now while 'tis warm,” she says, “and still,
I'll lay my lines with subtle skill.
Fat flies will be abroad to-day,
And wander, woe to them, my way.”

So round and round she climbs and clings,
And winds and welds her widening rings,

Until her dainty task is done,
And shines suspended in the sun.
Her central station then she takes,
And stands so still no fibre shakes.
A lifeless thing, as all would guess ;
Like marble, mute and motionless.

'Tis strange this Spider should instead
Of holding up, hang down her head,
And topsy-turvy spend the day
In such an odd inverted way.
But hanging thus, of course, her eyes
Gaze not aloft on sunny skies,
But peer into the pool below,
Where one fine Trout swims to and fro.

This fish to-day is in such luck,
He nothing does but suck and suck,
And swallow down his gaping throat
Fat flies which fall and flutt'ring float.

With envy filled and angry spite
The Spider eyes the sumptuous sight,
Begrudges Trout his fatt'ning feed,
And gazes down with jealous greed :
What fortune wafts her cannot see ;
Lets all her tangled insects free ;

Has but one thought, on that intent,
The Trout to thwart and circumvent.

See now with nimble step she wends
To where the bright-belled heather bends
Above the clear reflecting pool,
So warm with colour, yet so cool.
See how she, climbing higher, higher,
Now perches on the purple spire,
And from her flings a silken line
So subtle, filmy, small, and fine,
That none its presence e'er could know
Save by its golden sun-stained glow.
Wind-wafted see it wanders o'er
A feath'ry fern on yonder shore,
Flits here and there with wavy flights,
And falling finally alights.

Then Spider knows her line is laid,
Her frail suspension-bridge is made,
And finding it securely caught
She tests its strength, and draws it taut ;
Out ventures on the shining strand,
And hangs mid-air 'twixt land and land.

What pangs and palpitations prey
On Spider as she wends her way ;

For is not Trout, her fishy foe,
In wait to gobble her, below ?

With safety o'er the gulf she swings
And on a graceful green fern springs,
Then filmy fibres here and there
Soon stretches 'cross the silent air ;
A centre strikes, and circling near
Makes radiating lines appear ;
Then winds upon them silken rings,
And resting, waits for wand'ring wings.

How artfully each line is laid ;
How masterly the whole is made ;
How finely formed to fit the place,
And fill each cramped and crooked space.
How proudly Spider eyes her work ;
What omens in those optics lurk ;
How scornfully she stares below
On Trout who wanders to and fro,
Who twits his tail and flips his fins,
And rolls his eyes and slyly grins.

See now a big bluebottle Fly,
With burly body buzzes by ;
Then turns, attacks the Spider's lair,
And tangled struggles in the snare.

Instanter ! like swift lightning's flash
 The Spider springs with sudden dash,
 And clutching Fly with fiendish force,
 Winds up in silken shroud his corse ;
 Then carries him away to suck
 His blood, and pity Trout's poor luck.

A gleam of silver in the air !
 Where now are Spider, Fly, and lair ?

Alone lies Trout on sandy bed,
 With water halos round his head.

XXVIII.

Hope and Haste.

FROM crowded city brothers twain,
To find their fortunes, braved the main,
And landed on a foreign shore
Far-famed for gems and golden ore.

These twin-born brothers. Hope and Haste,
Though worn and weary, would not waste
Their time in testing untried ground,
But sought a Sage, for lore renowned,
Who wielded well divining rods
O'er wastes and waters, stones and sods,
With such success and subtle skill
He gems and gold revealed at will.

To him they hurried through the heat,
And found before a rude retreat
A man majestic, tall and spare,
With furrowed face and hoary hair.

He silent stood, but, eagle-eyed,
The breathless brothers singly spied,
Then bent his broad brow, saying, "Speak,
Is it Experience ye seek?"

"Is that thy name? If so, 'tis true
For counsel sure we come to you.
We brothers are and Britons born;
And though we weary be and worn,
We long to learn without delay,
To hear thy wise lips swiftly say,
Where under all this wild waste ground
Can gems and gold be fastest found?"

Thus blurted Haste with breathless speed,
With graceless speech and shameless greed;
Then paused, expectant of reply;
But bowed the Sage and turned his eye
On Hope, and said, "Is this thy quest?"

"Yes," answered he, "yet humbler dressed
My words I would have sought to place
Before thy venerable face.
We fortune from thee humbly seek;
Pray pardon us and kindly speak."

Then spoke the Sage, "My sons, attend,
Unanswered none from here I send;

It is my happy life-long task
To teach the ignorant who ask."

Then pointing to a distant peak,
"Some thither go, who gold would seek ;
But 'tis a toilsome, tiring height
To reach at morn and leave at night ;
A rough and rugged road to tramp,
From home to hill, from hill to camp ;
And many delve and dig for days,
While not a nugget meets their gaze ;
Yet still they search the sandy soil
With health and hope and hearty toil ;
For waters sweet and heaven's air
Both waft and wash away their care ;
And well they know 'tis truth I've told
That trusting toilers must get gold."

Then pointing to a pool below,
"But others thither groping go.
In yonder bog so black and broad
Lie golden coins, a countless hoard ;
Who wills to win that treasure, may,
With little labour or delay.
But he who cares for self-respect
Will all such ill-won wealth reject ;

For sickening stench and staining slime
So charge the skin with scent and grime,
That honest folk with fingers clean
Will not with workers such be seen."

Then bowed the Sage, and bade "Good-day"
To Hope, for Haste had flown away
When half was said, and left unheard
The caution kind and warning word.

When Hope and Haste had hewn and cut
Both boughs and bark and built a hut :
Had fixed with warm debate the way
Which each would work for gold next day,
They sank to rest and slept the sleep
Of weary workmen, dreamless, deep.
When morning came, and those encamped
Arose and toward the mountain tramped,
With song and this refrain, "Awake!"
Hope speedily, with stretch and shake,
Awoke, left Haste still sleeping laid,
And joined the band with pick and spade.

When Haste awoke, held up his head,
And found his brother Hope had fled,
A stain of shame stole o'er his face,
While humbling thoughts and feelings base

Contended in his troubled mind,
And could no rest from riot find.

Then rushed he through the morning cool
Until he reached the putrid pool,
Where filthy vapour filled the air,
And sun shone through with ghastly glare.
So keen was he and great his greed,
He no deterring hint would heed,
But deeply plunged in dirty mire
And groped for gold with fierce desire.
A sickening sight it was to scan
A healthy, hale, and handsome man,
With sinews strong to delve and dig,
Begrimed and grov'ling like a pig.

When day declined the brothers twain
To homely hut returned again.
Came Hope and all his happy band,
Full heart had he, but empty hand.
Then entered Haste with hoard of gold,
Half-hearted, craven, coy, and cold.
He spread his wealth for Hope to see
And eyed the coin triumphantly ;
But Hope, so sickened by the scent,
With speed turned heel and straightway went

To where his comrades camped, and cut
Fresh boughs to build himself a hut.

Alone sat loathsome Haste and dazed,
Upon his golden treasure gazed
While feelings varied went and came
Of guilt and anger, pride and shame.
Resolve at length lit up his face ;
He rose, sought out a secret place,
And there, beneath the veil of night,
Concealed his filthy coin from sight.

Awake and weary, watching, worn,
He passed the night and longed for morn ;
And ere the sun itself was seen,
Ere grass and leaves again looked green,
Ere honest Hope was yet about,
Did Haste for distant town set out.
Along the dry and dusty road
For days he sad and silent strode,
Until at length with soles full sore
He found a famed Physician's door.

" Pray, tell me is there scent or paste
Will free me from this filth ? " said Haste.
" Is there cosmetic, powder, lotion,
Bath, blister, bolus, pill or potion,

No matter what the cost or pain,
'This skin will sweeten, free from stain?'

Curt answer came, "No sudden cure,
Nor scent nor soap can make thee pure.
Long time alone and watchful care
Thy stain and stench away will wear."

XXIX.

Little Lovebine's Blunder.

WHEN woods awake from Winter's night,
And see the sweet Spring's dawning light,
Each tree in haste puts on its dress,
And stands in leafy loveliness.

Thus in a little world of wood
Two sapling Trees together stood,
With arms so closely interlaced
They ever lovingly embraced ;
And by the bright sun's blinding blaze,
And all night long by moon's soft rays,
These lover Trees looked not around,
But gazed upon the lovely ground,
For 'mong the flowers there they knew
The wonder-working Lovebine grew.

Had they not seen it climb and clasp
Their friends together in its grasp,
And bind them blessedly for life
To share each other's joy and strife ?

They therefore gazed with longing eyes
To see its twining tendrils rise ;
And waiting watched till Summer sweet
Woody up the Lovebine at their feet.

All trees adore the Lovebine rare,
Which grows so exquisitely fair.
With whisper soft or shouting song
They praise the Lovebine all day long.
Far better die and fast decay
Than life lack Lovebine, they all say.

What rapture, then, these lovers filled,
And through their limbs love-laden thrilled,
When first they saw the Lovebine grow,
And wend, wind-wafted, to and fro.
They watched it move with hope and fear,
Now straying far, now stealing near,
And longed all day, with love-sick pain,
To feel its tendrils, but in vain.

They waved to it a welcome kind,
But Lovebine's eyes were ever blind ;
They whispered to the Wind their woe,
And bade it take their words below ;
Till Wind so well their longing told
That suddenly they felt the hold

Of Lovebine's tender, twining grip,
And trembled lest its grasp should slip.

Awhile the climbing Lovebine clung,
And round the happy lovers hung ;
But soon a strong, contending breeze
Came down and parted Bine and Trees,
Cast Lovebine's tendrils far away,
And urged the Trees to such a fray
Of fretting, chafing, fuming ire,
That each loved each as ice loves fire.

As strongest storms are soonest past,
So frenzied fury cannot last.
The wild Wind went, the calm Wind came,
And soon the lovers loved the same
As when they watched, with longing eyes,
To see the twining tendrils rise.

Sweet Lovebine too forgot the past,
And once more bound the lovers fast ;
Ran up their limbs and o'er their arms,
And wrapped them in its wreathèd charms,
Until the two Trees seemed as one,
And stood espoused in Autumn's sun.

In Winter, warmed by Lovebine's glow,
These two Trees felt nor frost nor snow ;

But when in Spring their sap began
To stream through all their veins, and ran
In haste from foot to head to make
Their foliage and flowers wake,
The wedded Trees had not one mind,
Were not consentingly inclined,
For this would not be short and strong,
And that would not be lank and long ;
While one would spread its branches wide,
The other liked them by its side ;
To each the other would not bend,
Contending to the bitter end.

Poor little Lovebine felt the strain,
And smiled, though racked within with pain.
In vain it tried to tie and tether
These Trees which would not grow together.
In wrath their branches now they wrung,
And cursed the Lovebine's bonds which clung
And held so closely, aye and ever,
That one from other nought could sever.

Thus bound they lived till Wind once more
Came back with cruel, raging roar ;
Among their boughs it rudely rushed,
Their interlacing arms it crushed,

'Gainst Lovebine's branches fiercely dashed,
And through its clinging tendrils crashed,
Till, bruised and torn on every side,
It, bleeding life-tears, fell and died.

'Twas thus the two Trees once more gained
Their liberty and unrestrained,
Each grew the way it wished to grow,
And ceased to call the other foe.

Now side by side they stand asunder,
And laugh at little Lovebine's blunder.

XXX.

How friend helps friend.

WHERE russet rocks and silver sand
Broke boldly from the stony strand,
And soaring straightway to the sky,
A hill became, uplifted high ;
There, lofty giant larches grew,
Whose branches bathed in heav'n's bright blue,
And clothed the heights in clouds of green,
A crown upon a stately queen !

From harm this hill was safely kept
By sea's strong arm which round it swept,
While pointed peaks protecting stood
Afar, and watched both hill and wood.

Among the trees so strong and tall
One lovely Larch o'ertopped them all ;
Of that high hill she was the crest
Or plume which rose o'er all the rest.
Beneath on short smooth grass there ran
Fat rabbits fearful of no man ;

While pouting pigeons full of food
Among the branches perched and cooed.
Above flew whitest sea-birds seeming
Like stars against the welkin gleaming.
There was not in this world of bliss
A tree more proudly placed than this.

When flowers purple clothed the ground
Of all the mountain moors around,
An idle Wind who spent his hours
In stealing scent from perfumed flow'rs,
While wandering with no intent,
Without a care which way he went,
Came softly sauntering and still
Until he reached this happy hill.
He swept the sea and stony strand,
The russet rocks and silver sand,
And floated o'er the dreaming wood
To where sweet Larch in silence stood.

Spell-bound, Wind started back amazed:
On Larch's loveliness long gazed,
Then came with fitful palpitations,
And wandered round with shy gyrations :
Still nearer ventured, sighed some vows,
And touched the tips of her chaste boughs

So softly she could scarcely say
If Wind had pressed her, yea or nay,
Till bolder grown with greed of bliss
He breathed upon her one coy kiss.

How suddenly her fate she knew,
For through her frame a love-thrill flew ;
Yet outer sign to hearten him
She suffered not in leaf or limb ;
But all in vain, for Wind, still near,
Fast losing all his foolish fear,
And taking passive no as yes,
Next tried a tender, close caress.

Now Larch no longer mute could be,
For trembling in her ecstasy
Through ev'ry feath'ry fibre green,
She sighed, and let her love be seen.

Then Wind, with longing lightly pent,
Upon the Larch his passion spent
With whirling, overwhelming might ;
Enwrapt her limbs with mad delight,
And urged the strength of his love-storm
So stoutly on her yielding form
That suddenly she fell, but falling,
With roars of rending roots appalling,

Was caught, and kindly bade to rest
Upon a neighb'ring Larch's breast—
A bleeding breast all crushed and torn,
But happy that it had upborne
A sister sinking deep in strife,
Fast losing all she loved in life.
And thus both grew with arms entwined,
Defying ev'ry wicked Wind.

When years had passed these Larches stood,
Still friends, the highest in the wood ;
The only ones, for on the ground
All other trees lay stretched around.

A mighty hurricane had burst
Upon that wood, and worked its worst ;
It swept the sand and spindrift high
To mingle with the leaves and fly
A cloud of ruin o'er the hill,
With vengeful violence to kill ;
But hurled itself with might and main
Against the standing Larch in vain ;
For leaning Larch was now a prop,
A friend indeed to stay and stop
The Wind's o'erbearing baneful breath,
And save her faithful friend from death.

XXXI.

Straight Sticks.

How wonderful, when leafless left,
The trees as if of life bereft
Sleep silently, or only sigh
When soft-winged breezes wander by.
How exquisite when we can trace
Their tiny twisted twigs, like lace,
Against the glorious deep gray glow
Which worshippers of Evening know.

With wonder overwhelming me
I watched this fairy tracery
Turn solid silver, as the spell
Of night's bright orb upon it fell ;
And when at morn the slender stems
Were strung with glist'ning dewy gems,
The Sun, arch-alchymist, with flame
And incantation carols came.
One flash of amber ! and behold
The silver changed to glowing gold ;

Then one deep draught of dawning day
Sun drew and laughed the wealth away.

Disconsolate and dumb I stood
Before a bare and wintry wood ;
There tier o'er tier and belt o'er belt
The lusty trees together dwelt,
And stretching up a mountain wide,
Completely covered all its side.

The Willow, Ash, and Walnut grew
Beside the Maple, Elm, and Yew,
While branches, forming spire and arch,
Of Oak and Aspen, Lime and Larch,
High heavenward stretched ; a stately shrine,
Diviner than man's most divine.
Together far as eye could reach
Stood Plane and Poplar, Birch and Beech,
While on the highest bright blue line
There grew no other trees but Pine.
More mixed and motley multitude
No musing mortal ever viewed.
It was a little sylvan nation,
With living trees for population.

In tearful tale I now must tell
What fatal fascination fell

On this fair forest, and what fate—
What sorrowful and wretched state—
O'ertook these trees no distant day
Beneath a senseless, baneful sway.

The fascination fettered all
And held the trees in helpless thrall.
'Twas nothing but a foolish fashion
Become an overwhelming passion ;
A discontented, weak desire
To grow on ground a little higher ;
A wish contemptible to ape
The Pine pyramidal in shape,
With trunk erect and ev'ry limb
Extended stiffly straight and slim.
'Twas strange great trees should so incline
To imitate the pigmy Pine ;
To wish their waved and rippled arms
Strained straight and robbed of all their
 charms.

These Pines, 'tis true, were proudly placed,
And well their high position graced ;
But Beauty loves both hill and glade,
Both lustrous light and sombre shade ;
She all would with her presence bless,
And lavish on them loveliness.

To ev'ry tree she gives a share
Of her own royal robe to wear.

But still the Willow wept and wailed,
Because its bending branches trailed
So near the sward, and told its woes
To pretty, pensive, pale Primrose.

The Poplar's pride was passing great,
For like a Pine it stood in state ;
But 'twas not wholly satisfied,
Because the branches from its side
Shot straightway to the shining sky
Instead of horizontally.

The Oak and Ash and Elm and all
The mighty forest—monarchs tall,
Grand giants on which mortals gaze
With admiration, awe, amaze,
Bereft of dignity and pride,
Stood sulking sorely side by side,
Begrudging Pines the happy fate
Of being born with branches straight.
And yet these Pines but straight Sticks were
Which lived unchanged from year to year :
In size alike, in shape the same,
To act as one their only aim ;

As one they bowed, as one they spoke,
Their rigid rules no Pine e'er broke ;
And as to their position high,
The Willow planted there would die.

Most strange was this hallucination ;
This fanciful infatuation
So filled the trees with discontent
That one and all were ever bent
On seeing what they could not see,
And being what they could not be.
Like other restless ones who roam
To fetch what they might find at home ;
Or living in a paradise,
Sail o'er the sea with straining eyes
To seek on some deserted shores
What waits for them at their own doors.

XXXII.

Wind or Water.

I stood upon a shore one day,
The middle of the month of May,
And watched sweet Summer's fresh, fair face
And form of fascinating grace
Approach the beach and peep between
The tangled trees of tender green.

A goddess ! from the grove she gazed,
Till ev'ry living thing, amazed,
Leaped up and laughed for her sweet sake
As if their very hearts would break ;
E'en waves, a wild and boist'rous band,
Came singing, shouting to the strand.
To Summer's beauty all creation
Combined in one superb ovation.

'Twas nearly noon, and that sweet sun,
Which comforts all and scorches none,

Shone softly with a grateful glow
As, rapt, I wandered to and fro.

Beside my boat at length I woke,
And left the shore with lazy stroke ;
Rowed round the point, and up a creek
Where those who solitude would seek
May find the fane where Silence sits,
And see the home she never quits.

There lay I in my little boat,
And let her unattended float ;
But soon she struck a sandy bank,
On which she sat and softly sank.

The water round was still as sky,
While all the weeds and finny fry
So easily were sought and seen
They might have on the surface been :
But all the beauties of that place
Could not avert my fixed face
And eager eyes, which only scanned
The rippled sand ! the rippled sand !

What lustrous lines ! what subtle shading !
What colour flashing forth or fading !

What fields of cloud with furrows thin !
What stripes surpassing zebra's skin !
What mountains miniatures, and vales !
Ah ! language, feeble language, fails
To tell the beauty of that strand,
That lovely, laughing, rippled sand !

My heart was aching with the load
Of beauty in this blessed abode,
And would have burst its bonds and died
If Silence still my tongue had tied ;
But words came welling forth, and shook
The startled stillness of each nook
And secret shelter, where no sound
Had ever ere that day been found,
For at their thresholds ev'ry sigh
Fell, faltering and dumb, to die.

" Whose work is this, this rippled sand ? "
I shouted. " Ho ! what artist grand
Plies brush and chisel in this place
With such consummate skill and grace ? "

" 'Tis I ! " cried Water. " I who lave
The sand in ripples with my wave. "

" 'Tis I ! " cried Wind. " 'Tis I who make
This Water's wavelets bound and break

Upon the shifting sand, and raise
The rippled ridges you so praise."

"Good friends," said I, "one must be
wrong ;"

But which it was I wondered long,
As, basking in the bright noon-day,
The tide took Water far away,
While Wind, the busybody, fanned
And levelled all the rippled sand.

When Water came again to find
The rippled sand all smoothed by Wind,
It said, "This Wind can sweep a floor,
Can smooth the sand, but nothing more."

Then Wind: "Stay, Water! hold thy peace,
Thine idle insolence pray cease ;
'Tis true thy wavelets bound and break
Upon the sparkling sand to make
The rippled ridges rise in rows,
But only when my good breath blows
Upon thy flattened, foolish face ;
Then only, wavelets o'er it chase.
'Tis I, the Wind, with cunning hand,
Who shape and shade the silver sand,

Whilst thou, weak Water, feeble fool,
Art but my slave, insensate tool."

Then thought I how the Moon besides
Was mistress of the changing tides,
How Wind could not with wavelets play
If Moon took Water far away;
And how e'en Wind would droop and die
If Sun forsook the shining sky.

By movement of my buoyant boat
I knew she was again afloat,
So urging her with leisure oar
I sought and strode upon the shore,
And sat with Summer till sweet Eve
With whispered warning bade me leave.

Then as I strolled along the strand,
Still thinking of that rippled sand,
Whose work it was perplexed my mind;
Whose? Moon or Water, Sun or Wind?

XXXIII.

The Workman's Three Wishes.

A WORKMAN, weary, homeward wending,
A wizened Witch saw cramped and bending,
Who sat upon a wayside stile
And beckoned him with stealthy smile.
She said : " Come, sit beside me, Clown,
And tell me why you scowl and frown
As though ten thousand torments fell
Within your soul and body dwell ? "

" Just move your bones a bit aside,"
The Workman said, then thus replied :
" I'm tired and ache with ceaseless toil ;
I hate this tilling of the soil.
Here, feel how horny hard my hand ;
And see my face, how wrinkled, tanned ;
Are these the signs of wealth and peace ?
When will this weary working cease ? "

Still nearer to the Workman's side
The pleased Witch sat, and thus replied :
" A piteous plight ; poor Workman, speak,
And tell me what it is you seek."

" I would not plough, nor reap, nor sow,
Nor use the flail, or spade, or hoe ;
I would, in place of all my woes,
Have peace and plenty and repose.
A pound a week and nought to do
Is all I want ; now, what say you ?"

" 'Twill be," she said, " an easy task
To furnish all the gifts you ask.
Take these three wands, and each in turn,
When wishing, boldly break and burn ;
No matter what the boon may be,
It will be granted instantly."

A shiv'ring sound of skin and bone,
And silent sat the man alone.
With wits bewildered, most amazed,
Upon the wands a while he gazed ;
Then homeward in a hurry went,
On trial of the spell intent.

He told his wife the wondrous tale,
Which made her tremble, quake, and quail.
The Witch's wand then snapped in two,
Straight on the flaming fire he threw,
And watched it burn with fitful flashes
Until it fell consumed in ashes.

Chink ! chink ! ere he to turn was able,
A golden pound fell on the table !

“ Go buy me beer and baccy, wife ?
I'll live a lazy, lordly life ;
And call on Master, let him know
I shall no more a-working go.”

Then down into his chair he sank,
And snoozed and snored, or smoked and drank,
While ev'ry week was always found,
On table top, a golden pound.

Ere many months had worn away
The Workman grew less blithe and gay ;
His face became both puffed and pale,
His appetite began to fail ;
His sleep went too, and then he grumbled
Because all night he tossed and tumbled.

Rheumatics gave tormenting twists
To fingers, ankles, toes, and wrists ;
So sullenly he sat all day
And watched the weary time away.

“ I’ll break another wand,” said he,
“ And wish all pain may from me flee.”
From cosy chimney-corner nook
The Witch’s second wand he took,
And breaking it with fingers lame,
Let fall the pieces in the flame ;
Then watched it flare with fitful flashes
Until the whole was burnt to ashes.

“ Hurrah ! ” cried he, “ good-bye to pain !
I’m happy and at peace again.
Go fetch me beer and baccy, wife,
Once more I’ll lead a jolly life ;
And as you pass, the Doctor tell
To come no more, for I am well.”

Then from his chair he rose in haste ;
About the house and garden paced
Through wintry wind and cold and rain,
And laughed because he felt no pain.

But rheumatism will not bear
 Such cruel, wilful want of care ;
 Against it ev'ry joint rebelled,
 And huge with inflammation swelled.
 Of other symptoms came a train ;
 Heat, thirst, and fever ; still no pain.
 So near the grate he held his feet
 That they were blistered by the heat,
 And still no pain he had nor knew,
 Although his feet were roasted through.
 His fingers too he cut and crushed,
 Yet felt it not. His eyes were flushed,
 Inflamed, and red, for ev'ry gust
 Blew in them cinders, chips, and dust ;
 And yet he knew not what befell him,
 For pain alone could warn and tell him.
 It seemed the man was daily fated
 To grow more maimed and mutilated.

His wife could nothing do but cry ;
 Was sure, and told him, he would die.
 The Doctor came, and shook his head,
 And said the man was well-nigh dead ;
 Was sorry for the good wife's sorrow,
 But certain he would die to-morrow.
 The Workman heard his fearful fate,
 And called, " Go bring, ere 'tis too late,

The Witch's wand, the last, and I
Will wish that I may never die."
He broke it, burnt it, watched it flash
And flicker till it turned to ash.

"I live!" he cried; "who says I die?
Go give that Doctor back his lie.
I live! I live!" But ev'ry day
His frail form wasted fast away,
Till nought but skin and skeleton
Were left for eye to gaze upon.
A form most fearful; all forsook
Both him and wife, nor dared to look
E'en at his window, lest they saw
The sight which filled each one with awe.

Thus lived he on until his wife
Departed, as all do, this life—
A blessed boon that she could die
And leave his curs'd anatomy.

Alone he sat the table near,
And towards it turned his eager ear,
For 'twas the time he weekly found
The clinking, chinking golden pound.
Instead he heard a laugh deride him.
And lo! the Witch sat close beside him.

She chuckled in his frightful face,
And grinned a horrible grimace.
Two forms as like as they could be,
Mere skin and bone, were she and he.

“My love, my own!” she screeching cried,
“Henceforth I’ll be thy happy bride.”
Then hand in hand, far out of sight,
Both vanished like a flash of light.

She whisked him with her ev’rywhere,
Through caverns cold and dungeons drear,
Through wastes and woods, and wild, weird
skies,
Where shrieks were heard and terror-cries,
She raved and raged at such a rate,
The Workman cursed his cruel fate
And longed from wife and life to fly,
But could not die. He could not die!

XXXIV.

The Snow-man's Sun.

UPON a snowy Winter's day,
A band of children in their play,
With many runnings to and fro,
At length upreared a Man of Snow ;
And when at night their little heads
Lay sleeping on their downy beds,
They saw before their startled eyes
A white and ghastly giant rise ;
And while some trembled in their dreams,
And others uttered fitful screams,
The Man of Snow did naught but scold
Because the night had grown so cold.

He longed for Sun and noonday heat
To warm his face and frozen feet ;
He called the lovely night unkind,
And cursed the chilly, cruel wind,
Forgetting that the frost alone
Could make his body strong as stone.

And so, poor fool, the whole night through
He cried for heat, and stronger grew,
Until the morning broke at last,
And found him frozen firm and fast.

Anticipating warmth and day,
With joy he hailed the morn's first ray,
And when the Sun's deep searching heat
Upon the happy Snow-man beat
In dazzling diamonds decked and dressed,
He deemed himself quite doubly blessed.

"What luxury!" he'd scarce exclaimed,
When lo! he was deformed and maimed;
For having now begun to thaw,
His arm fell off, and then his jaw.
His head was just about to drop,
When, passing by, a dainty Fop,
The melting Man of Snow drew nigh,
And gazed upon him, glass in eye.

"Ha ha!" laughed he, "thy life is short!
Then drawing back he lunged in sport,
Transfixed the Snow-man through the heart,
And slashed his head from trunk apart;
Cut off each limb, and hacked and hewed
Until the ground was fairly strewed

With fragments, and the melting snow
Began a little Stream to flow ;
And as it wand'ring went away,
The Fop distinctly heard it say—
“ Accursed be the wicked fashion
Which smiles on gross and guilty passion.
The Miser's gold forms but a chain
To bind him body, bone, and brain.
Death dances in the Drunkard's cup,
And Lust fast burns its victim up.
Take warning ere thou art undone,
Lest lust of Pleasure be thy Sun ! ”

XXXV.

Plain and Peak.

A PEERLESS Plain ! Her fresh fair face,
O'erspread by sweetest smiling grace,
With beauty beamed. She was Earth's pride ;
E'en Sun for her sake would have died.
She was to ev'ry sense so sweet,
All fell and worshipped at her feet ;
And those who on her glory gazed
Were rapt, astonished, awed, amazed.

Bold Wind, so boisterous and brave,
Was ever her submissive slave.
He hovered near with bated breath
Lest he should be some flower's death ;
And walked with tender trembling tread,
With anxious and distressful dread,
For fear of causing slightest pain
To his beloved mistress, Plain.

He was her messenger, and went
Most willingly wherever sent.

He knew her secret—it was love
For one high hill that loomed above.
This huge, majestic, pointed Peak,
Which seemed the starry sky to seek,
Stood clad in snow—a giant great,
Who sat in everlasting state.

As Plain loved Peak, so Peak loved Plain,
Yet ever distant were these twain.
Plain pitied her beloved Peak
Because he stood so bare and bleak.
She longed his stately brow to twine
With graceful bands of blooming bine ;
To clothe him in a flow'ry suit
And fill his arms with rich ripe fruit.

She hated Sun, who twice a day
Could deck his dress with colours gay,
And change his raiment, white and cold,
To richest red or glowing gold.
She grudged the silver clouds the bliss
Of giving her loved lord a kiss.
She longed for him alone to live,
And would that none but she should give
Her dear one any joy or treasure,
And none but she afford him pleasure.

With conscious beauty she would lie
Before him basking, and would sigh
And sorrow that his shining face
From hers was such an endless space.

Oft would she bid the Wind awake
And swiftly scented incense take,
In hope perchance the perfumed air
Might bathe her lord's brow, brave and bare ;
Or she would whisper words of love
And give them Wind to take above.

No thoughts of self were there in Plain :
She asked for nothing back again.
Her Peak was very poor, she knew ;
But then he was so strong and true.
He could but send her sheets of ice,
Or little sprigs of edelweiss.
But what of that, why need she care
Who was so rich, with wealth to spare ?

“ Go, tell him, Wind, his smile is worth
The whole heaped treasure of the earth—
That he must not my riches heed,
Nor think I gift or dower need—
Go, say for him alone I live,
Although he nought to me can give.”

When Wind had whispered ev'ry word,
And Plain's kind message Peak had heard,
A thund'rous laugh came rattling down,
Convulsing him from foot to crown ;
But why he laughed no one could tell,
He kept his secret thoughts so well.

At length he said to startled Wind,
" Return and tell thy mistress kind,
My love shall with her ever rest,
If I with hers be always blest.
Then bid her bend her beauteous ear
And listen to my friend most dear,
Sweet Rivulet, for she will tell
True tales of me—she knows me well."

With what impatience Plain began
To ask the Rivulet, which ran
With silent, soft, or sedgy sighs
Before her beaming, eager eyes,
What she, a stream, could know or say
Of Peak, who lived so far away.

" Friend Rivulet," she cried, " I come
To bid thee speak. Pray be not dumb,
For my dear love, brave Peak, hath told
My good Wind truly, thou dost hold

Full knowledge of his heart and ways,
So tell me how he spends his days.

“I do beseech thee—is it true
Thou hast a love—I would I knew—
I do believe it, for e’en there
Forget-me-nots I see thee wear.
Then, as thou lovest, speak and tell
The truth of him I love so well.”

“Fair Plain,” said Rivulet, “thy love,
Who watches o’er thee from above,
Hath sent me here to give thee health,
Surpassing beauty, joy, and wealth :
Without the boon he bids me bring,
A wretched, wrinkled, loveless thing
Wouldst thou be now. No laden vine,
No fruit nor flowers, corn nor wine,
Would come to thee did I not flow
Among thy plants and make them grow.
He gives thee ev’rything, indeed,
Though thou the source wilt never heed.”

“Canst thou not see on high a gleam—
A silver chain of shattered stream,
From him to thee, for ever run?—
A bond uniting both in one.”

“’Tis true,” said Plain; “now well I know
That all to my loved Peak I owe.
Ashamed am I; good Wind, pray go
To my kind lord and tell him so.”

XXXVI.

Fox's Friends.

WHEN worn and weary people press
To bonny Britain north of Ness,
Escaping from the stir and strife
And labour-load of London life,
To seek some happy Highland home
Where bracing breezes blow, and roam
With healthful sport o'er hill and plain
Till heart and head are hale again ;
Past then is all sweet Summer's show,
For fruits instead of flowers grow,
And Autumns lap is laden quite
With apples, nuts, and berries bright.

How beautiful bright berries are !
Each like a shining scarlet star
In Autumn's fiery firmament
Of sun and stain, by Beauty blent.
How happy they who see and know
The clustered clouds of leaves, aglow

Like Evening's splendid sunset sky,
Most beautiful when doomed to die.

The limner's hand must be divine
Which can such colours rare combine
As beech and bramble leaves display
When Summer's sun has passed away.

Thus as I mused and silent stood,
Beneath broad branches in a wood,
A Fox with stealthy footsteps stole
From 'neath a beech's knotted bole,
Where he had burrowed out a den
Concealed most cunningly from men.

Fear filled his face, for he had slain,
To satisfy great hunger-pain,
A goose, the Granger's, who now swore
He'd find the Fox—have gore for gore.

How wistfully Fox seemed to seek
Some helpful friend with whom to speak.
He rolled his anxious eyes about,
And shaking, stood in doleful doubt,
Until a Raven black he spied,
And bade her settle by his side ;
Then told his tale, and added, " Say
If thou canst help in any way."

“Friend Fox,” the Raven answered, “I
Feel much afraid thou’rt doomed to die ;
But I will pile a heap of sticks,
Well covered o’er with thorns and pricks,
Against the door of thy deep den ;
The Granger might not find thee then.”

Fox shook his head, “The Granger’s eye
Would soon thy pile of sticks descry.
At once he’d hurl the whole heap o’er,
Discovering my open door.
Indeed, dear Raven, thou’rt most kind,
But I some subtler friend must find.”

Anon, with grunt, there passed before
Sly Reynard’s den a big black Boar.
To him Fox spoke, “I prithee say
If thou canst find a wary way
Of hiding me and my good den
From vengeful Granger and his men.”

“I could,” said Boar, “with my strong snout
Root up the rubbish round about
Thy den’s dark door, and spread it there,
With such consummate skill and care,
That none would deem a Fox could dwell
Beneath the earth I’d heaped so well.”

“Good Boar, my grateful thanks I give,
But how am I to breathe and live,
If thus be closed my cosy cave,
And home be changed to choking grave?
Adieu, good Boar, I'm much afraid
I must invoke some other aid.”

Next came an Ox with heavy tread,
And huge high horns upon his head.
Before him Fox both quaked and quailed,
And all his woeful fate bewailed ;
Then ventured anxiously to ask
If Ox the den's wide mouth could mask.
“Unhappy hound,” the Ox replied,
“If thou wouldst have me save thy hide,
This heavy stone with horns I'll roll
Before the entrance of thy hole.’

“Pray do,” said Fox ; “but see that air
Can pass the stone and reach my lair—
But no, although 'twould give protection,
Thy plan has one most grave objection ;
The stone would stay, and I in vain
Should struggle to get out again.
'Twere bad to die for want of breath,
But worse to slowly starve to death.

Alas! thou canst not help me, Ox ;
I soon shall be a slaughtered Fox ;
Canst thou not hear the Granger's men
Now shouting as they seek my den ? ”

Suspended by slight silken thread,
A Spider near the Fox's head
Next spoke, “ If thou wouldst shielded be,
Have faith, and leave the task to me :
I'll place a barrier before
Thy dismal den's great gaping door,
I ; little as I am, alone,
Stronger than sticks or earth or stone.
Go hide thee and securely sleep,
For I thy den will safely keep. ”

Soon Reynard saw the Spider's plan,
And winked as only Foxes can ;
Then down the den with new delight
He whisked his long tail out of sight :
And not too soon, for he could hear
The Granger's noisy men quite near.

Then Spider, wisely working, laid
Long lines across the den and made
A web with wondrous speed and skill,
Just large enough to fairly fill

The Fox's cunning hiding hole
Beneath the beech's knotted bole.

'Twas scarcely finished ere the men,
With Granger leading, saw the den.
"Found! found!" they cried with ringing
cheer,
"Our foe the Fox is surely here.
Bring pick and spade, we soon shall see
If he is hiding 'neath this tree."

But suddenly said Granger, "Stay!
No Fox has entered here to-day;
'Twere waste of work, for see, my men,
A Spider's web across the den!"

Fast fell their faces when they knew
The Granger's words were all too true.
Such evidence none could gainsay,
So off they set some other way.

Thus little Spider saved the Fox
Better than Raven, Boar, or Ox;
And her slight spinning proved, alone,
Stronger than sticks, heaped earth, or stone.

XXXVII.

Coal and Chalk.

FROM sudden show'r to shield my head,
I stood beneath a shelt'ring shed
And watched and waited till the rain
Gave way to shining sun again.

From eaves above me fell a row
Of pearly drops to pools below,
With bursting bubbles, splashes, sprinkles,
Rich rainbow rays and tiny tinkles.
The drip, drip, drip, drip seemed to say,
“ We'll drip, drip, drip, drip all the day.”

But soon the beams from brighter skies
Shone welcome to my watching eyes ;
And then I saw a kiln afar
With furnace flaming like a star ;
While close beside me on the ground
Two heaps of rugged lumps I found.
One pile was Coal as black as night,
The other Chalk of dazzling white.

Both heaps were well within my reach,
I stooped and picked a piece from each,
And holding them in either hand,
The little lumps intently scanned,
Until in each I soon could trace
The features of a human face.

I saw how Chalk's celestial nose
With haughty bearing heav'nward rose,
While Coal's calm countenance was sad,
As though his head hard troubles had.

'Twas laughable to see the way
In which these little lumps now lay
And watched each other, just as though
Thoughts passed between them to and fro.
Methought I might expect from each
Ere long some sign or sound or speech ;
But as they neither silence broke,
I, bowing, first to white face spoke.
" Ho ! Mister Chalk, my little man,
Pray speak, if such a pigmy can.
Why turnest thou thy short snub nose
On high with such repugnant pose ?
Is ev'rything so poor and small,
Is nothing fair or good at all,
That thou must gaze with scornful stare
At vacancy in far off air ? "

A small shrill shriek, which made me jump
And nearly drop the little lump,
Came breaking forth with words from Chalk,
Convincing me that he could talk.
“Young man,” said Chalk, “I want to know
Why thou dost mix with fellows low,
And hold that baseborn blackguard there
As though he my fit equal were ?
It is not fair to make me keep
Close company with such a sweep.
This fellow, Coal, with negro face,
Belongs to quite a lower race.
Just fling the filthy wretch away,
And wash thy hands from blackness, pray.”

I looked at Coal, who smiling said,
“Let dirt be yellow, blue, or red,
It still is dirt : 'tis but a mark
Of black on white, or light on dark.
This Chalk would surely soil thy sleeve,
And whiteness most unsightly leave,
Which all the world would say was dirt,
No matter how Chalk's pride was hurt.”

To change the subject Chalk began,
“This Coal is but the slave of man ;
To work for him from night to morn,
And warm him, this black Coal was born.”

“’Tis true,” said Coal, “my pow’r I give
That others may be glad and live.
How many men are maimed and die
Who fetch me up from where I lie.
’Twere fitting I should grateful be
To those who risk so much for me.
A blessed strength about me bides ;
Sun’s very soul within me hides ;
The force of fiercest fire is mine ;
Poor Chalk, what puny pow’r is thine.
’Tis pitiful the painful fate
Of being born with empty pate ;
The whitest skin were recompense
Too slight for lack of strength and sense.”

“Fine sentiments,” I cried to Coal,
“Pray preach to me and tell my soul
What most to shun as sadd’ning sin ;
What most to covet and to win.”

“These two, I tell thee in a trice,
Are selfishness and sacrifice,”
Said Coal ; and I, who could not quite
With relish take a truth so trite,
Replied, “Thy meaning well I catch ;
Words, words—pray show me deeds to match.”

Soon came o'er Coal a sweet sad smile,
And silently he mused a while,
Then spoke and said to me, "If, sir,
'Twould please thee from this spot to stir
And bear me to yon flaming fire,
'Thou soon shalt compass thy desire."

So towards the kiln with wond'ring walk
I carried off both Coal and Chalk.
Arrived, I peered at Coal perplex
What order he would give me next :
But soon he spoke, "I pray, sir, throw
Me boldly in the fierce fire's glow,
And gently heave friend Chalk on high,
That he in kiln may o'er me lie ;
So will I burn, and dying give
My life that Chalk may, quickened, live."

I hurled my Coal straight in the fire,
And Chalk I heaved a little high'r,
Then turned and pondered long, alone,
The sermon of that sable stone.

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